THE TYPES OF ENGLISH LITERATURE

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THE TYPES OF ENGLISH LITERATURE

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The Types of English Literature

EDITED BY

WILLIAM ALLAN NEILSON

THE ENGLISH LYRIC

BY

FELIX E. SCHELLING

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THE ENGLISH LYRIC

BY

FELIX E. SCHELLING

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AUTHOR OF ELIZABETHAN DRAMA, ENGLISH LITERATURE
DURING THE LIFETIME OF SHAKESPEARE,
THE QUEEN'S PROGRESS, ETC., ETC.

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TO
MY FELLOW-LOVERS OF LITERATURE
AND LABORERS IN HER FIELDS
THE MEMBERS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

PREFACE

In the following account of the English Lyric, its origin in early times and its progress through the ages to our day, I have endeavored to write always from impressions, renewed, direct, and made at first hand. But it would be madness in these days of commentary not to know as much as possible of the wise and the unwise things that have been said by those who have traversed this fascinating path before me. Independence of judgment, even though it lead to singularity at times, is the most precious right of criticism; but a becoming respect for fellow-workers is alike courteous and judicious.

It was my original intention to include, in this book on the English lyric, a chapter on the lyrical poets of our American Commonwealth and the colonies of the mother country, whether they spread over new continents or dot far distant seas. This seemed the more desirable as it is a canon of my faith that language alone is the criterion of literary unity, wherewith the accidents of political union or severance have little to do. On trial, however, it was soon clear that a treatment of our American authors which could satisfy alike the exacting claims of neighborhood and reasonable proportion was quite impossible; and the plan was abandoned. It is as yet contrary to the traditions of criticism to treat of American writers as a part and parcel of the literature of our common race. The acceptance of this rule of practice lightens materially the task of British critics; while it enables those American born to draw their portraits of our own authors on a scale, at times, of disproportioned importance. In a general history of poetry in the English tongue, however minute, Thomas Pringle is mentionable for one poem which Coleridge had the discernment to single out for praise. In an anthology of South African verse, Pringle dilates into a considerable figure, "the father of South African poetry." This case is extreme; and yet the parallel is not wholly misleading. "A single chapter in a book of any size in which to treat Bryant, Whittier, Emerson, Longfellow, Lowell, Holmes, Poe, Whitman, Lanier, and Aldrich!" exclaims a fellow-countryman in dismay; while the London critic superciliously asks in cool print: "Has America produced a poet?" Who is to say? Who can draw with the object so out of focus?

The bibliography, in a volume dealing with so many names, can make no attempt at completeness. All references to editions of single authors and, for the most part, criticism referable to individuals, has been rigorously omitted. References to current detailed bibliographies, such as those of *The Cambridge History of English Literature*, should suffice even for the student. On the other hand, an attempt has been made to include a large number of titles of lyrical anthologies with their attendant introductions and to supply the titles of the more important books dealing with the lyric as such.

I acknowledge my special indebtedness to the several valuable articles of my friend and colleague, Professor Cornelius Weygandt, on contemporary poets in *The Sewanee Review*, *The Alumni Register* of the University of Pennsylvania, and elsewhere. I regret that his book, *Irish Plays and Playwrights*, now in the hands of the printer, was not available for my use before the completion of my text. The second chapter of this book owes much to the critical suggestion of another friend and colleague, Professor Clarence G. Child. Still other helps and encouragement have also been mine, as always, at the hands of others of the Department of English; whilst last, though by no means least, I record with pleasure the courteous and always capable supervision of Professor W. A. Neilson, the general editor of this series.

F. E. S.

University of Pennsylvania, January, 1913.

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THE ENGLISH LYRIC

CHAPTER I

DEFINITIONS

THE primary conception involved in the term "lyric" has always to do with song; and it is the song-like quality of the lyric that falls most conspicuously into contrast with the epic or telling quality of narrative verse. But this kinship of the lyric with song involves another important contrast. When Aristotle declared music the most imitative of the arts, he meant that music reflected more directly the feelings and passions of men than words which, however poetic, can merely describe or symbolically express them. So, too, the lyric is concerned with the poet, his thoughts, his emotions, his moods, and his passions. In the lyric the individual singer emerges, conspicuous in the potency of his art. We have no longer, as in Homer, a sonorous mouthpiece for the deeds of Achilles or the fated wanderings of Ulysses, but, as in Sappho, the passionate throbbings of a human heart seeking artistic expression. With the lyric subjective poetry begins.

But the lyric is not the only kind of poetry that deals with human emotion; for close beside it stands the drama with its picture of complex human life and passion in action and interaction. The lyric deals with passion and emotion in their simplicity and as such. For if a poem detail more story than is sufficient to make plain the situation out of which the emotion of the poem arises, it is to that extent an epic or narrative poem. And if a poem involve a conflict, the outcome of a succession of events or the result of a conflict in character or personality, the poem is to that degree dramatic. In words derived from the technical sciences, dramatic poetry is dynamic; lyric poetry is static. Hence the simplicity, the brevity, and the intensity of the finest lyrical poetry; and hence the argument, sometimes urged, that in the lyric alone have we the actual spirit and essence of poetry, and that the epic and the drama become poetry only in proportion as they contain the elements that add the soul of passion and the wings of song.

It is a moot question still with the dogmatists as to whether or not rhythm is the "essential fact of poetry";[1] though few will go so far as to declare that "unmetrical" and "unpoetical" are interchangeable terms among the criteria of the poetical art. Lyrical poetry, more than any other, however, demands the aid of those devices of language which ally human speech to music. Rhythm ordered with artistic variety on the basis of an organic regularity; the recurrence of stress, pause, line, and stanza so that the pattern is repeated though with individual distinction; melody in the sound and succession of words and harmony in their fitness for the thought and its changes — such are some of the graces of form demanded of the lyrist. That the language of strong emotion often takes to itself, both in literature and in life, a rhythmic regularity, is an observation common to every school rhetoric, and, unlike some such observations, literally true. And it is not less true that emotion serves to clarify thought and add at times the flash of wit and the color of figurative expression. In the lyric better than in other varieties of poetry can we appreciate Wordsworth's famous definition of poetry as "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings," even if the artistry and elaboration of many an individual poem of the type compel us likewise to recall Wordsworth's added words "recollected [we may interpolate, 'and lovingly wrought out'] in tranquillity."

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[1] For a discussion of this topic, with the conclusions of which the present writer does not agree, see F. B. Gummere, *The Beginnings of Poetry*, New York, 1901, chapter II.

The lyric, as we have seen, then, is personal and subjective, concerned with the poet himself, his thoughts, emotions, and sentiments. But this does not demand that lyrical poetry be of necessity autobiographical or fail of its end, the production of an artistic impression of subjective reality; for a poet may succeed at times in projecting his personality — so to speak — into the person of another and speak and feel unerringly as that person speaks and feels. This power — and it is possessed only by the greatest — is usually called dramatic instinct; but in so far as it is poetic it is really lyrical, that is, wholly subjective. When Coleridge, for example, exclaims enthusiastically of Shakespeare, "What maiden has he not taught delicacy, what counsellor has he not taught statecraft?" we find the critic recognizing that Shakespeare has so transfused himself into the personalities of his imagined personages that he realizes their emotions to a degree beyond that which we may reasonably expect of real beings under like circumstances; that is, he has, by an exercise of a subtle artistic sympathy, so typified the emotions of each that he has realized to us an art beyond nature. This is a subjective process, one inherent in the large heart acted on by the strong brain of the master-poet. It is a matter of broad sympathies and unerring judgment; but it is also a matter of artistic insight, and has little to do with that "dramatic instinct" which, admirable in its own nature, is concerned more or less with the objective arrangement of material, the framing of situation, and the heightening of effect.

It is a demand of the lyric, which it shares with all good poetry, that it unite universality of feeling with unity of form. Turning, as the lyric must ever turn, "on some single thought, feeling, or situation," it is easily unbalanced and its artistry destroyed. Most repugnant to this fragility is any attempt to hang on the delicate structure of a lyrical poem the pendant of a moral; for the mood induced by the poem thus becomes merely a means to an ulterior end and is destroyed in the very moment of its birth. Unity of subject requires a certain degree of brevity and the elimination of most of the elements which other varieties of verse possess in common with prose, elements justified in lyrical poetry only to the degree in which they make for intelligibility. Thus, we must trespass neither in the direction of action, mixed motives, nor in that of an overplus of description or narrative, or the poem ceases to be lyrical. Unity of form follows unity of subject and adds to the effect of concentration. It is inconceivable that the lyric, which flourishes throughout English literature in so endless a variety, should be bound down to conventional form; and yet, the design or pattern once chosen in a given case, it must be preserved with the inevitability of the recurrent blossom of a chosen flower. Universality is obviously that quality which makes a work of art "not of an age but for all time"; and this quality is achieved only when the poet recognizes and makes his own those essential elements which give permanency to his theme and discards the accidental and the evanescent. The most perishable form of verse, for example, is satire; for although it rises at times to general applications because of the perennial moulds into which human vice and human folly are apt to run, satire is, none the less, apt to take the guise of concrete and passing allusion. Hall, Pope, and Butler must be read with notes not only for this reason, but because satire naturally runs to the type gathered into classes, and to caricature which emphasizes the non-essential lines of the picture and the perishable traits of humanity. The drama labors under a similar difficulty from the necessity which ties the scene, to a greater or less degree, to the accidents of time and place. The lyric, on the other hand, from its simplicity and celebration of universal feeling, has a better chance of permanency. While men are lovers and women fair, we shall take pleasure in the thousands of changes sung upon the immortal theme of love; and while the conditions of human life are what they are and ever have been, we shall love to have the poets tell us:

> Gather ye rosebuds while ye may,
> Old Time is still a-flying;

or listen to the noble, timeworn theme:

> The glories of our blood and state
> Are shadows, not substantial things;
> There is no armor against fate;
> Death lays his icy hand on kings:
> Sceptre and crown
> Must tumble down,
> And in the dust be equal made
> With the poor crooked scythe and spade.

The range of the lyric is the gamut of human emotion, and nothing could be more inept than the current notion of a lyric as merely a poem of love. The lyrist may sing the raptures of a pure soul in communion with God, or the apples of Sodom that turn to dust and bitterness between the teeth of the lost sinner: and there is much between hell and heaven. Indeed, here as elsewhere, there can be no limits set to art. Wit, humor, folly, fancy, cynicism, misanthropy (if it be "literatesque" like Diogenes' tub), — all may serve the lyrist. The gods laughed on Olympus and went to feast and revel with the Ethiopians. Literature has no need for the limitations of a false dignity, for life does not know them. And yet there are dangers to the lyric in some emotions. Thus, misanthropy is apt to become rhetorical and egoistic, both of which qualities destroy art because they limit its universality. So, also, cynicism often becomes dangerously intellectualized, didactic, or ethically unsound; and all of these things are repugnant to poetry. These topics will find fitter discussion at the points in the history of the lyric wherein we shall meet them. In conclusion of these matters be it remarked that in anthologies of English poetry the epigram has sometimes trespassed on the domain of the lyric. The epigram is often musical and commonly short, and here the resemblance between it and the lyric ends. For the epigram is intellectual, rhetorical, and conscious, addressed to stir in the hearer an approval of art; the lyric is emotional, poetic, and unconscious, in so far as a piece of artistry often involving a loving elaboration may exist for its own end and only secondarily for the pleasure which it is its legitimate function to occasion in the hearer or reader. However, it would be unfair to the lyric to exclude from its domain that admirable variety of verse which has of late been denominated *vers de société*. Here, although, as one of its most successful exponents has put it, "a boudoir decorum is, or ought always to be, preserved; where sentiment never surges into passion, and where humor never overflows into boisterous merriment,"[1] there is yet abundant opportunity for the display of some of the daintiest graces of the poetic art. The line of demarcation is difficult to draw: clearly the malevolence of satire is not lyrical, nor the broad humor of parody and farce, any more than the ballad, where narrative outweighs the emotions involved, or the drama, where action transforms the unity of a single mood into the changing pageant of passion in clash with passion. That our conception of the lyric, like that of everything else, has broadened with the process of the suns, it will be one of the provinces of this book to make plain in its place. For the present let this suffice for the delimitation of our subject.

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[1] F. Locker-Lampson, in preface to *Lyra Elegantiarum*, p. ix.

CHAPTER II

THE MEDIÆVAL LYRIC

WERE the subject of this book the lyrical element in English literature, much might be written of poetry in song in Anglo-Saxon times when all were called on in turn to sing, from Hrothgar on his throne and the hero Beowulf beside him to Cædmon, humble attendant on his Abbess Hilda and for the nonce a keeper of beasts. But such song was purely epic, and subjective only in the sense in which the ballad may be said to be subjective as representing the unified sentiment of the nation or tribe. It is not denied, however, that there was poetry in Anglo-Saxon times more personal in its note. Two poems of an early date recount the experiences of the professional singer or poet known as the gleeman or scop. In "Widsith," that farfarer discourses with pride in his profession of his wanderings and of the peoples and kings that he has known. In the "Deor" a gleeman laments his loss of the favor of his lord, and consoles himself with like example of the vicissitude of fortune and with the recurrent refrain — the only example of a true refrain in Anglo-Saxon poetry — "That sorrow went over, so may this." On this Brandl justly observes that a refrain as an expression of an emotion is ever and under all conditions lyrical.[1] "Widsith," if it ever possessed an original personal significance, has become by additions little more than a list of names; the "Deor" retains more of the lyrical quality. More unmistakably lyric than either of these is the beautiful poem entitled "The Seafarer," in which one who so journeys tells of the hardships and lonesomeness of the sea, only to alternate this mood with the awful joy of heart that comes to him who answers its imperative and insistent call. "The Seafarer" is more grim and urgent in its earlier form, before the Christian consolations of the later additions blunted its primitive sentiment with a religious application. Another Anglo-Saxon poem may be mentioned, "The Ruin," in which, with a fullness of elegiac emotion hardly to be expected of so early an age, the poet moralizes over the fallen glory of Roman luxury and grandeur, though he knows this not and hyperbolically attributes these mighty walls, now broken into barrows, to the handiwork of giants. If we turn from the prehistoric and traditional period of our first poetry to the earliest period of English literary culture, we find still a poetic literature almost entirely epic. Cynewulf, "England's first great poet," practised an art which is essentially epic, although the personal note is struck, not only in the several passages in which the poet has inserted the runes forming his name, but in many another place, especially in the "Christ," and in the impassioned "Vision of the Rood," which all true lovers of poetry would fain continue to believe the work of Cynewulf, would the critics allow them. With a mention of the indubitably elegiac quality of "The Wanderer," like the "Deor" the lament of a gleeman for lost and better days, and by some held to contain the most lyrical passage in all Anglo-Saxon, this enumeration of the lyrical element in our earliest English poetry must come to a close.[1] The riddles, from their ingenuity of form and thought and from their appeal to a like quality of mind in the reader, belong to the category of the epigram, not of the lyric. We may accept as lyrical the joy of battle and the occasionally vivid bits of suggestive description to be found in the epic poems both national and religious. Otherwise the poetic emotion of Anglo-Saxon poetry is elegiac, and the lyric, so to speak, is as yet held in solution.

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[1] *Geschichte der altenglischen Literatur*, Berlin, 1908, p. 35.

Another question now confronts us, the relation of the lyric to that considerable, if dubiously defined, body of verse which, handed down from generation to generation without the intervention of scop, gleeman, or minstrel, is ultimately referable to the tribal community seeking communal expression in song. Actual folk-song is for the most part a matter of inference; for when song is written down, the conscious artist has already intervened. And yet it is not to be denied that much popular poetry, lyrical and other, still preserved in England and elsewhere, strikes back its roots deep in what must have been the primitive song of the folk. As to the nature of this basis for the superstructure of the poetry of art the reader must be referred elsewhere.[1] We are told, for example, that the earliest written poetry of the *trouvères* "discovers" the lyric of art in the very act of its emergence out of the rustic amatory songs of the folk, sung with accompanying dance at their festivals by the throng, and accurately identified by the scandalized clergy with survivals of pagan worship.[2] No such transition as this can be traced in the literature of England. For, as we have seen, the lyrical element of Anglo-Saxon poetry is at best no more than elegiac; and the true lyric when it came to England, like so much else, was introduced in the form, in the spirit, and even, at first, in the language of France.

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[1] These lines (92–96) of "The Wanderer" have been called the most lyrical in all our Anglo-Saxon verse:

Hwǣr cwōm mearg? hwǣr cwōm mago? hwǣr cwōm māþþumgyfa?
Hwǣr cwōm symbla gesetu? hwǣr sindon seledrēamas?
Ēalā beorht bune! ēalā byrnwiga!
Ēalā þēodnes þrym! hu sēo þrāg gewāt,
Genāp under nihthelm, swa hēo nō wǣre!

As to the lyric of the Middle Ages in general, it is most deeply traced, as is well known, in Provençal dancing-songs that were features immemorially of the festivals of the folk, wherein were sung the praises of spring, the union of youth and joy and the like, reduced almost to an obligatory formula. Fostered by the social amenities and elegances of castle and court that now came more and more to temper the rudeness of earlier times, these songs developed, in the eleventh century and in the hands of the *troubadours*, into a highly conventional and artificial literature of the art of love. This was almost altogether lyric; and in it great importance was attached to certain refinements of speech and conduct entitled "*courtoisie*," which enjoined a species of fashionable gallantry, in its ideals, whatever its practices, alike remote from sensuality and from actual courtship with the wedlock of the lovers in view. This *troubadour* poetry was wholly aristocratic, and long is the list of knights, nobles, and even kings that grace its annals. But the professional *troubadours* are at least as numerous; and as the popularity of this poetry spread from its cradle in Poitou and Limousin, first to Catalonia and Italy, and later from the south over France proper and England, the rigidity of its rules and usages was relaxed as its examples were imitated in new tongues and under novel conditions. The double marriage of Eleanor of Guienne was an important means of this diffusion of the "*courtois*" lyric northward. As the daughter of William of Poitou, "the father of the *troubadours*," this cultivated lady presided over the court at Bordeaux, extending a bountiful and encouraging hand to the poets of her own race. Later, as queen of France for fifteen years, and lastly, from 1154 to 1206, as queen of the English Henry II (then sovereign as well of half of France), Queen Eleanor spread her taste for social and poetical pleasures and stretched forth her patronage as far as the bounds of the language of France. Provençal *troubadours* came thus to live for protracted periods of time in England; and Frenchmen and men of English birth attendant on the court of King Henry learned at first hand the *courtois* poetry of Provence,[1] a matter of no small import to the growth of the lyric of art.

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[1] See especially F. B. Gummere, *The Popular Ballad*, Boston, 1907, in the present Series.

[2] E. K. Chambers, "Some Aspects of the Mediæval Lyric," *Early English Lyrics*, London, 1907, p. 261.

Another influence that went to the preparation of the English lyric was that of the religious poetry of the day. The solidarity of the mediæval church and of mediæval education, cemented as it was with Latin, the universal tongue of learning, needs only to be stated to be recognized. There was no scholarship outside of the church. The clergy shaded down from the decorous officers of place to Chaucer's "poor parson" and the monastic orders, through all degrees of friars, mendicant and unattached, to the wandering scholars, as notorious for the wildness of their lives as for their wit and talents, on occasion, as mere minstrels. The Latin formulæ of service and Latin hymns were ever on the clerics' lips, and, as the higher clergy in England for a couple of centuries were almost wholly French-speaking, French culture permeated the cloister and the abbey as well as the court. It is not surprising, then, to find the influence of Latin hymns on early English religious poetry strongly tinctured with elements derived from the secular love songs of *troubadour* and *trouvère*. It was this that led to the extensive Marian verse in which were extolled the five joys of the Virgin and the like. Few of these early religious poems are in any degree lyrical, although an exception may be urged in the case of the beautiful poem entitled "A Love Rune," written by Thomas de Hales, an eloquent discant on the vanity of earthly love and the sanctity of virginity. More certainly lyrical is the macaronic "Song to the Virgin," the elaborate and easy flow of the stanza of which is noteworthy.

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[1] On this whole subject, see especially Gaston Paris, *La Littérature Française au Moyen Age*, Paris, 1890, pp. 175 ff. and 18 ff.

Of on that is so fayr and bright
Velud maris stella,
Brighter than the day is light,
Parens et puella;
Ic crie to the, thou se to me,
Levedy, preye thi sone for me,
Tam pia,
That ic mote come to the,
Maria!

Lyrically effective, too, are the strong elegiac verses beginning

Were beth they biforen us weren,
Houndes ladden and hauckes beren?

reverberating a string that has sounded down the ages from Anglo-Saxon times through Villon's "*Mais où sont les neiges d'antan,*" and Nash's "Queens have died young and fair," and will resound to the latest lyrists of all time.

The several manuscripts in which these poems occur date variously before 1250 and towards the end of the thirteenth century; but the composition of these poems, as always in these cases, may be dated backward many years with probability.[1] By the middle of the thirteenth century, poetry in English had come fully into revival, a fact well established by the lively and interesting debate, *The Owl and the Nightingale,* which corresponds in point of date almost precisely with the poem of Hales. *The Owl and the Nightingale* is not lyrical, but its genuine poetic merit, the ease and certainty of its verse with the purity of its English vocabulary, conspire to explain why the earliest extant mediæval lyrics in English, both sacred and secular, display none of the stuttering simplicity of nonage and experiment.

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[1] See appendix, "Sources of Texts," *Early English Lyrics,* as above.

Turning now to the earliest extant lyrics that are purely secular in kind, we meet with three little snatches of song, all of them set to music. Two retain a shadow of the Anglo-Saxon melancholy; the third is the famous "Cuckoo Song."

Summer is icumen in,
Lhude sing cuccu,
Groweth sed and bloweth med
And springth the wde nu.
Sing cuccu!

Awe bleteth after lomb,
Lhouth after calve cu;
Bulluc stirteth, bucke verteth;
Murie sing cuccu.
Cuccu, cuccu,
Wel singes thu, cuccu,
Ne swik thu naver nu.

Despite the spirit and natural charm of this little lyric, we must be careful not to refer it to either the folk or to too unaffected a native-born love of nature. "The Cuckoo Song" appears in a manuscript the earlier portion of which is supposed to have been written in the Abbey of Reading about the year 1240. It is accompanied by the musical notation of a *rota* or *rondel* (a species of song not unlike the later canon), with explicit Latin directions as to how to sing it; and the words are a conscious poetical adaptation of the *reverdie*, or song of greeting to spring, well known in France. The music of this little song has received praise as cordial and deserved as that bestowed upon its fresh and natural words.

With the opening of the fourteenth century the manuscript remains of mediæval song in England become fuller. The famous *Harleian Manuscript 2253* alone contains more than a hundred pieces in verse and prose, Latin, Anglo-French, and English, more than two score of them lyrics in English; and there are some six or seven other manuscripts the contents of which must date in writing well before 1400, though none contain so large a body as this. Such is the variety of these poems, the uncertainty of their precise time of writing, and the diversity of the dialects in which they are written, that enumeration rather than classification must suffice to set them before the reader. And yet certain broad lines by way of classification are not impossible of distinction. There are the songs of the minstrel, the poetry of the cloister, and the lyrics of the polite poets, although it is not always quite certain which is which; and, cleaving through this threefold distinction by reference to origin, there is division by way of theme into religious and secular poetry. The polite poet was late to emerge, and we may defer him and his work for the moment.

The minstrelsy of the Middle Ages seems hardly more separable from the polite poetry of *troubadour* and *trouvère* than the songs of the wandering scholars are separable from the poetry of clerics on the one hand and that of the folk on the other. It may be suspected that when the polite art of poetry fell into professional hands, the English minstrel, whose line of inheritance is direct from the gleeman, rose somewhat in dignity, though he must have descended in more senses than one from his other ancestor, the knightly *troubadour* and *trouvère.* The mediæval minstrel, whatever his occasional success and repute, was often little more than a privileged vagabond, licensed to wander where he would, picking up a livelihood by his talents as a singer, actor, and general entertainer. Although disdained as an inferior, alike by the cleric and the man at arms, the minstrel was ever welcome in times of festival whether at court, in the castles of the nobility, at gatherings in the market town, or even at the hospitable tables of the religious houses. Indeed, we read of fortunes squandered by nobles on minstrels and of gifts to them of money and even of lands.[1] We do not know to what extent the minstrel was responsible for the remnants of the mediæval lyric that have come down to us. That he was responsible for much seems hardly questionable, for it was to his interest as an entertainer to keep a record of his craft. Without further reference to this matter of origins let us look at some of the varieties of these lyrics.

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[1] On this whole topic see the admirable chapters of Chambers, *The Mediæval Stage*, London, 1903, I, pp. 11–86.

The distinguishing elements of the folk-song have been briefly stated: "as to substance, repetition, interjection, and refrain; and, as to form, a verse accommodated to a dance, question and answer, and rustic interchange of satire."[1] The same authority adds that although these features are not to be found combined in any one specimen of the mediæval lyric, all are exemplified in the collections extant. The refrain is often meaningless, as

Po, po, po, po,
Love bran and so do mo;

or distorted, as "*Kyrieleyson*," applied to verses far from religious or even respectable. It is often in French or Latin, as *Veni coronaberis*, in the case of a catch in praise of the ivy, referable back to heathen worship of that plant in strife with the holly as emblems of the fructifying principles. Most usually the refrain bears, however, a close relation to the subject in hand, as where each stanza of a carol ends with "Wolcum, Yole!" each stanza of a bacchanal with "But bring us in good ale!" or of a satirical song in mockery of the sad estate of the lover:

Such tormentes to me I take,
That when I slepe I may not wake.

But these have, of course, nothing actually in common with the folk. In the following, however conscious this particular version, the improvisation of the initial phrase by the individual singer, the chorus and the very sway of the throng to and fro, are all well preserved:

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[1] F. M. Padelford, in *The Cambridge History of English Literature*, Cambridge, 1908, II, 422.

I have twelfe oxen that be faire and brown,
And they go a grasing down by the town.
With hey! with how! with hey!
Saweste not you mine oxen, you litill prety boy?

I have twelfe oxen and they be faire and white,
And they go a grasing down by the dyke.
With hey! with how! with hey!
Saweste not you mine oxen, you litill prety boy?

Another form of verse, more or less ultimately referable to folk-song, is the verse amœbæan or question and reply. A romantic fragment of this begins:

Maiden in the mor lay, in the mor lay sevenight full,
Well was hire mete, wat was hir mete ?
The primerole ant the violet.

The dialogue form was developed in later amorous verse to a degree of elaboration in poems such as "The Nutbrown Maid" or in Henryson's "Robene and Makyne," but this last at least has a very different origin.

In the carol, which was brought over from France at least as early as the twelfth century, the minstrel trespassed on the province of the religious poet, while touching at the same time the popular festivities handed down with the modifications of compromise from pre-Christian times. It is no wonder, then, that the carols range from narratives of the Nativity and other related events of the life of Christ to naïve expressions of the joy, the feasting, and the good fellowship of Yule-tide and the customs that accompanied this most important festivity of the year. Several delightful songs declare the traditional strife between the holly and the ivy:

Holly bereth beris,
  Beris rede enough;
The thristilcok, the popingay
  Daunce in every bough.
Wel away, sory Ivy!
  What fowles hast thou,
But the sory howlet
  That singeth "how how."

Others relate to the ancient rite of bringing in the boar's head in procession and with song:

The boris hede in hondes I bringe,
  With garlondes gay and birdes singinge,
I pray you all, helpe me to singe
  Qui estis in convivio;

while still others offer little more than jovial words of welcome:

Lett no man cum into this hall,
  Grome, page, nor yet marshall,
But that sum sport he bring us all:
  For now is the time of Christemas!

Closely related to the more serious carols of the Christmas season are the spiritual lullabies in which the Child is represented in his mother's arms or lulled to sleep in his cradle by her song. At times a dialogue ensues between the two, the Child foretelling the sufferings that are to be his or uttering prophetic promises of the glory that is to come. A variety of this type is the complaint of Mary, which takes many forms, such as that of an address to Jesus, or to the cross, a dialogue between Mary and Jesus or Mary and the cross, or even a trialogue in which John also figures.[1] These last are closely akin to the famous mediæval Latin hymn, "*Stabat Mater dolorosa.*" As to the lullabies at large, many of them are distinguished by a genuine depth and tenderness of feeling and by inventive fertility in similitude and poetic adornment. Their variety of metre, too, derived with equal facility from the Teutonic four stress alliterative verse, from the *septenarius* of the Latin hymns or the more varied stanzas of French secular song, is here, as elsewhere in the mediæval lyric, endless. Characteristically mediæval is the type which converts the thought into allegory:

Lully, lulley, lully, lulley;
The fawcon hath born my make away.

He bare hym up, he bare hym down,
He bare hym in to an orchard browne.

In that orchard there was an halle
That was hangid with purpill and pall.

And in that hall there was a bede,
Hit was hangid with gold so rede.

And yn that bede there lythe a knyght,
His woundis bledying day and nyght.

By that bede side kneleth a may,
And she wepeth both nyght and day.

And by that bedde side there stondith a ston,
Corpus Christi wretyn ther on.

The recurrence of the refrain after each couplet, the repetitionary quality of the cumulative statements, the Teutonic simplicity of the verse, the allegory and its directness, unite in this little poem to produce an effect not easily equaled by our late poets who have attempted the revival of things mediæval. Longer and less well sustained is the allegory of another poem wherein the poet fancies himself a careless youth treading his way "of a somers day," his hawk on fist, his spaniel by his side, the game in sight, when a rough brier pricks him as he passes and bids him "*revertere.*" Such poems connect the groups of religious poems with those that dilate on the vanity of life, and hark back ultimately to the *Psalms* and *Ecclesiastes* and to the many patristic writings that dwell on the favorite mediæval theme, *de contemptu mundi.* And here, too, belongs that grim conception of life as a dance of death, popular subject for brush and chisel as for drama and the lyric.

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[1] *Cambridge History of English Literature,* II, p. 434.

Erthe appon erthe wolde be a kinge;
Bot howe erthe to erthe sall, thinkes he no thinge.
When erthe bredes erthe, and his rentes home bringe,
Thane schalle erthe of erthe hafe full harde partinge.[1]

These are tones such as those of the deepest pipes of the organ when sound ceases to be wholly audible and stirs us only as a mysterious and disquieting tremor. Less moving are the poems the intent of which is only monitory: trust not friendship untried, be careful not to talk o'er much, keep money in thy purse, beware of losing the freedom of bachelorhood; and these in turn shade off into satirical verses directed against women, their wiles, their shrewishness, their idle gossip, and ale-bibbing. With them and with the reiterated truisms of moral and gnomic verses we speedily pass out of the realm of song into the close confines of didacticism, where "no birds sing."

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[1] *Early English Lyrics*, p. 171.

The love songs of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries defy in their variety any attempt at classification. The influences that went to their making were much those governing other lyrical poetry, save that here direct influences from France are more certainly traceable. Among the several French types translated and imitated most frequently are the address, the *débat*, the *pastourelle*, and the *ballade*, the last ordinarily losing its form. The address often takes the shape of a New Year's letter from the poet to his lady, couched in stately terms declaring undying allegiance and service. The *débat* is restricted in English to a dialogue between a heartless lady and her devoted "servant." It is sometimes prolonged to great length and maintained with more ingenuity than lyricism, as in the well-known example of *La Belle Dame Sans Mercy*. The *pastourelle*, a common form of the *chanson d'aventure*, is either a love song, in dialogue between two rustics, or the love-making of a gallant and a country maiden. Of this last two interesting English specimens are extant. One of them has cast off wholly the foreign spirit and, though only a late version exists (one sung by Henry VIII and his courtiers), from its recurrent refrain and other features the poem is doubtless of far earlier origin. The first stanza runs:

Hey, troly loly lo, maid, whither go you ?
I go to the meadow to milk my cow.
Then at the meadow I will you meet,
To gather the flowers both faire and sweet.
Nay, God forbid, that may not be!
I wis my mother then shall us see.[1]

It was the snatch of an old *pastourelle*, otherwise known, that Feste sang in *Twelfth Night :*

A Robyn, jolly Robyn,
Tell me how they leman doeth
And thou shalt knowe of myn;

and it was the *pastourelle* that Henryson glorified into that most charming of his shorter poems "Robene and Makyne" which enforces the naïve but wholesome lesson that

The man that will nocht quhen he may
Sall haif nocht quhen he wald.

"Of all forms of amatory poetry," says Padelford, "the *ballade* enjoyed the greatest popularity in England. . . . Every phase of the conventional love-complaint, every chapter in the cycle of the lover's history is treated in these *ballades* precisely as in the corresponding verse in France."[2] Without further specifying these influences in forms such as the *aube* or complaint of a lover at the approach of morning, the *chanson à personnages* or song of the rites of spring, or the effect of lightsome measures such as those of the *lai* and the *descort*, we may turn to the larger characteristics of this rich literature of late mediæval amorous song. Here we find the joy of life and a feeling for the beauty of the world, flowers, birds, and sunshine, all, in a sense, the conventional furniture of the poet and yet not wholly lacking in that quality of particularity which critics are accustomed to associate only with later times. In a famous song the poet bursts forth:

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[1] Reprinted in *Anglia*, XII, p. 255, in an older form.

[2] *Cambridge English Literature*, p. 442. This passage must be interpreted as applying to the content, not the difficult technical form, of the *ballade*, which, as a matter of fact, was little practised in mediæval England save by Chaucer and his followers.

> Bytuené Mersh ant Averil,
> When spray biginneth to springe,
> The lutel foul hath hire wyl
> On hyre lud to synge.
> Ich libbe in love-longinge
> For semlokest of alle thinge;
> He may me blisse bringe;
> Icham in hire bandoun.
> And hendy hap ichabbe yhent;
> Ichot from hevene it is me sent;
> From allé wymmen mi love is lent
> Ant lyht on Alysoun.[1]

Attention has been called to little personal touches among these lyrics. Of Alysoun we learn that "hire browe" was "broune, hire eye blake." "One wommon woneth by west"; a second is described as "that sweté thing, with eyen gray," and of still another, a maid of Ribbesdale, we are told, in what amounts to "the precision of a miniature," that "hire chyn is cloven" and she

> Hath a mury mouht to mele.
> With lefly rede lippes lele,
> Romaunz for to rede.

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[1] Printed in Böddeker, p. 147. *Lutel foul,* little bird; *lud,* voice; *libbe,* live; *semlokest,* seemliest; *he,* she; *Icham,* I am; *bandoun,* lordship; *hendy,* fair, lucky; *yhent,* gained; *Ichot,* I wot; *lent,* turned.

Unquestionably the English minstrel worked himself freer of "the metaphysics of love" than his Gallic elder brother; he avows frankly the nature of his passion, declaring how, as

In a wyndon, ther we stod,
We custe use fyfty sythe, [1]

and the lady in turn as frankly confesses,

That I nam thyn, and thou art myn,
To don al thi wille.

To the Latin of the cloister touching the French of the court, with all the cross-currents of their intermingling with the vernacular, must be ascribed the macaronic nature of so many of these poems both sacred and secular. To these influences, too, must be referred both the perversion of hymns and the parodying of sacred songs by the wandering scholars as well as the retaliatory adaptation of amorous ministrelsy to sacred uses. The Franciscans especially were active in this last, enjoined as they had been by their founder, St. Francis, a *trouvère* in his youth, to become *joculatores Domini*. It has been noted that "the only two names to which religious lyrics attach themselves in the thirteenth century are both those of other minorites." There are not lacking other later examples.

The martial spirit, however it permeated the age and although it produced much verse which belongs to the occasional class, has given us only one name with which indulgent criticism can link the title, lyrist. Of Lawrence Minot we know literally nothing save his name, which he attached in two places to a manuscript containing eleven poems in lyrical form dealing with the deeds of Edward III against the French and the Scots between 1333 and 1352. Minot is a skilful versifier, after the intricate mediæval scholarly manner, and his lines are direct, vigorous, and imbued with the species of patriotism that lauds the victor and gibes the foe. I cannot feel that "the poetical value of these songs has been somewhat unduly depreciated."[1]

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[1] How at a window, as we stood, we kissed each other fifty times.

The polite poets of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were surprisingly unlyrical; even Chaucer, of whom the modern spirit is so consistently affirmed, with all his marvellous range of epic and dramatic art, is reflective and elegiac, ever musical, yet rarely quite lyrical. *The Book of the Duchess*, *The Prioress' Tale*, and the lawyer's *Tale of Constance*, all, however, in parts disclose Chaucer lyrically, when he dips for the nonce below the rippling surface of his incomparable narrative art. "Truth," "Gentilesse," and "The Former Age" are pieces admirably reflective, and Chaucer's *vers de société* — "To Rosamund," for example — rings charming variations on its conventional and artificial themes. But when all has been said, there are few authentic lyrics in Chaucer. Perhaps best among them, though also on a theme well-worn, is the burst into song of the birds at the close of *The Parlement of Foules:*

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[1] See Hall, J., *The Poems of Lawrence Minot*, Oxford, 1889, and C. L. Thomson in *Cambridge English Literature*, I, p. 398.

Now welcom somer, with thy sonne softe,
That hast this wintres weders over-shake,
And driven awey the longe nightes blake!

Seynt Valentyn, that art ful hy on-lofte; —
Thus singen smale foules for thy sake —
    Now welcom somer, with thy sonne softe,
    That hast this wintres weders over-shake.

Wel han they cause for to gladen ofte,
Sith ech of hem recovered hath his make;
Ful blisful may they singen whan they wake:
    Now welcom somer, with thy sonne softe,
    That hast this wintres weders over-shake,
    And driven awey the longe nightes blake.

This little poem is in form a *rondel*, a development among the French poets of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries of the popular dance-song (*rondet* or *rondet de carole*) and consisting of two elements, the text which varies and is sung by the leader, and the refrain, repeated in unvarying words, by the other singers. The *rondel* developed into several varieties from the eight-line form, commonly called a *triolet*, to those of thirteen or fourteen lines. The ordering of the refrain complete, one line of the text, one line of the refrain, two or more of the text, closing with the complete refrain as here, is the usual arrangement. Chaucer was fond of these difficult exotic French forms, the *ballade* in particular, which ordering three rimes in eight lines interwoven (*a b a b b b c*), repeats the stanza thrice on the three rimes and concludes with an *envoy*, or application, still playing on the earlier three rimes. Chaucer wrote under influences emanating from France practically throughout his career; they were overwhelmingly predominant in his earliest work, not only in metrical forms and titles such as the *Compleynt* (a love poem of mournful intent usually addressed to a pitiless lady), but in the plan and spirit of his work. And all these things continued in the poets that followed Chaucer and vowed fealty to him. But if Chaucer, with all his grace, melody, and powers of observation, is not essentially lyrical, no more lyrical is any one of his immediate disciples and successors. The trilingual moral Gower, feebly sprawling Occleve, Lydgate, biographical if not subjective in his satirical flash, "London Lyckpenny" (if the critics will allow it to be his), the author of *Wallace*, King James with his *Kingis Quair*, prolonging a plaint of love to 1400 lines — none of these is lyrical. It is not, indeed, until we reach Henryson, Dunbar, and Skelton that the lyrical note breaks forth among these learned poets; in them, with all their morality, satire, and allegory, the lyric is like a sparse and belated blossom of the gorse, otherwise of foliage harsh, dark, and thorny. To Henryson, as we have seen, we owe the earliest English pastoral poem, "Robene and Makyne," an amœbæan lyric of delightful naïveté. With Skelton and Dunbar, who was the first British poet to see his works in print, we reach a new age, and with these names to carry over we may fittingly conclude this chapter.

CHAPTER III

LYRICAL POETRY IN THE ENGLAND OF THE TUDORS

AT the opening of the sixteenth century the greatest author writing in an English tongue was the Scottish poet, William Dunbar. Dunbar's education was complete about 1480; he had meditated taking orders, but instead travelled abroad, as the scholars of the day were wont to do, visiting France and England. Some years before the opening of the new century Dunbar had become the king's poet, and his life from then on is associated with the court of James IV of Scotland, who appears to have supported him with a substantial pension towards the end of his life. There is a tradition that Dunbar fell with his master at Flodden Field; at least we hear no more of the poet after 1513. Dunbar is the greatest of the Chaucerians. As such he belongs to the older age, and modernity is not to be expected of him. Indeed the May-morning, the dream, the allegory of bird and beast, grotesqueness of imagery, even the moralizing platitude — all the hackneyed conventions of the old poetry — are Dunbar's. His observation of nature — which has sometimes been praised — betrays him (though perhaps here he only followed his models in Middle-English) into such generalizations as this:

> A nychtingaill with suggurit notis new
> Quhois angell fedderis as the peacock schone:

obviously a bird that sings sweetly must likewise be gorgeously plumaged. And yet Dunbar is likewise a powerful and delightful poet in his own right, and one who, but for the difficulties of his voluble Scottish tongue, must long since have come more fully into his own. Music there is, and movement, in all Dunbar's poetry, and it has been confidently affirmed that he was the first British poet to create classical lyrics of an artistic kind.[1]

In Scotland Dunbar had but one rival, Gawain Douglas, translator of the *Æneid*, a learned humanist to whom poetry was one of the diversions of rhetoric. Stephen Hawes, too, in England similarly practised poetry as a commendable moral occupation, setting up his poetical trinity, Chaucer, Gower, and Lydgate, too pious to distinguish their attributes, or perhaps too dull to discern them. An abler man and more abreast with his age was Alexander Barclay, translator of Brandt's *Ship of Fools* and author of the earliest eclogues in the English tongue; and abler still was John Heywood, the epigrammatist, and writer of clever and witty interludes. But no one of these worthy writers could have been betrayed into an indiscretion such as a lyric. Such was not true of their greater contemporary, John Skelton. Skelton was Henry VIII's poet much as Dunbar had been the poet of James IV.

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[1] Brandl, in Ten Brink's *Geschichte der englischen Litterature*, Berlin, 1893, II, 431. Cf. also F. B. Gummere, *Old English Ballads*, 1894, Introduction, p. xiii.

The English poet's social standing was less than Dunbar's, but, crowned *poeta laureatus* for his Latin verses at Oxford, his professional honors were greater as well as the emoluments that they carried. Skelton was one of the royal tutors, a lover of the new learning, a man of the type of Erasmus and More; but he was also a satirist, though his bitter flagellation of abuse, especially in the person of his arch-enemy Cardinal Wolsey, places him fathoms lengths above such a royal jester as Heywood. The wider reaches of the Skeltonian literature do not concern us here. Skelton was alike satirist, epigrammatist, and dramatist, and as such after his kind he is grotesque, allegorical, and didactic. But Skelton is likewise a poet, disclosing at times a lyrical note and power of music, the more remarkable that he produced his effects with the old tumbling metres, and appears to have been little affected either by reminiscences of earlier English minstrelsy or by the new Petrarchism so soon to dominate English amorous verse. The most musical of his lyrics bubbles with an ecstatic refrain:

Merry Margaret
  As midsommer flower,
Gentle as falcon
  Or hawk of the tower.

More of the universal stuff of the lover's complaint are the following lines, which, however, are distinguishable in more than their antiquated language from the new lyric shortly to spring up in the court of Skelton's master:

Go, pytyous hart, rasyd with dedly wo
Persy̆d with pain, bleding with wondes smart,
Bewayle thy fortune, with vaynys wan and blo.
O Fortune unfrendly, Fortune unkynde thou
To be so cruel and so ovarthwart
To suffer me so carefull to endure
That who I love best I dare not dyscure!

Before we proceed to the rise of the new court lyric in Wyatt and Surrey, let us turn to the lyrical poetry — true descendant of the poetry of the minstrel — that continued to be set to music and sung in the musical court of King Henry VIII. A considerable corpus of material has been preserved, made up of manuscript poems dating from the youth of the king, some of them by the royal hand, others by poets and musicians of his court; still other examples are furnished by parts of song books and collections of carols.[1] Indubitably much of this belongs to a far earlier time; but some of it is referable to the years immediately following King Henry's accession to his throne. As is well known though occasionally forgotten, Henry in his youth was a very accomplished prince, who added to prowess in athletic games of skill, a theological acumen that attempted the confutation of Luther in print. Among King Henry's minor graces was an ability to compose verses and set them to music; and several specimens of his skill in the wedded arts remain extant. Evidently the sociable monarch spoke out of his heart when he wrote:

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[1] See especially for this the collection of E. Flügel, in *Anglia*, XII, pp. 230 ff.

Pastime with good company
I love and shall until I die;

but it must come as a surprise to some that the English Bluebeard should ever have sung:

As the holly groweth green,
And never changeth hue,
So I am, ever hath been
Unto my lady true.

Some other names appear among these early court lyrists, such as William Cornysshe and Thomas Fardyng, both musicians of the Chapel Royal, an interesting testimony to the close union of music and poetry in these early times. That the composers were likewise the authors of the verses which they set to music we cannot of course be certain. That the poet and musician did often so combine, as frequently later, can scarcely be denied. In these collections there is no inconsiderable variety of subject-matter and treatment. By no means are all of these poems erotic; besides those celebrating good fellowship, there are hunting songs, gnomic verses, a few devotional poems, especially specimens of the lullaby, and even lines breathing the patriotic spirit. There are no more spirited verses in the collection than the following which appear anonymously and may be referred to a time just prior to the Battle of the Spurs, 1513:

Englond be glad, pluk up thy lusty hart,
Help now thi king, thi king, and take his part.

Ageynst the frenchmen in the feld to fyght,
In the quarell of the church and in the ryght,

With spers and sheldys on gudly horsys lyght,
Bowys and arows to put them all to flyght.

Intrinsically this poetry marks little if any advance beyond the earlier mediæval collections of like character. All is simple and natural in manner, free from the slightest attempt at descriptive effect, save for the decorative "flowers sweete," the over-worked nightingale, and the inevitable May morning. And there is as little of the classics as there is of the hyperbole of emotion. As to the versification, there is all but an absolute adherence to the older metrical system, that is: the system ultimately referable to Early English times and dependent less on distribution of light and accented syllables, than on regular recurrence of the accents (usually four, or reduceable to four) — or to that system as modified by the Latin septenary and its derivatives, the English ballad metres. Repeated rimes, internal rimes, repetitions of phrase and refrain added to all this, conspire to produce a contrast alike with the learned poets of the age and those that came after, and to justify Marlowe's phrase in designation of this kind of verse as "the jigging vein of riming mother wits." Indeed, with popular poetry such as this and Chaucerians more mediæval than was ever Chaucer a hundred and twenty years before, there was little promise in the early days of Henry VIII of the blossoming of lyrical poetry.

English lyrical poetry first felt the flush and the quickening of the Renaissance when Henry had been on his throne a score of years. As the excellent Elizabethan critic, Puttenham, quaintly puts it: "In the latter end of the same king's raigne sprong up a new company of courtly makers, of whom Sir Thomas Wyatt the elder and Henry Earle of Surrey were the two chieftaines, who having travailed into Italie, and there tasted the sweete and stately measures and stile of the Italian poesie, as novices newly crept out of the schools of Dante, Ariosto, and Petrarch, they greatly polished our rude and homely manner of vulgar poesie, from that it had been before, and for that cause may justly be said the first reformers of our English metre and stile." As a matter of fact, Surrey never "travailed into Italie," though Wyatt certainly did. Wyatt was the elder and the abler, and to him is due the new direction of English poetry; yet Surrey was an intelligent disciple. To Wyatt we owe the introduction of the Italian sonnet into English literature; to Surrey the modification of this exotic form to accord with English metrical traditions.

The lyric of love, as we have seen, found its earliest modern literary expression in Provençal poetry. This poetry in turn inspired, as is well known, the Italian lyrists of the thirteenth century, who sang with a sweetness, a purity, and literary finish which few succeeding ages have approached. The *troubadour* sought to idealize his passion, but it remained in his hands none the less a sensuous and joyous thing of earth. His Italian disciples were the first to achieve that apotheosis of love, whereby human passion becomes the symbol of a spiritual adoration of purity and holiness, and reverence supplants the lover's longing to possess the idol of his affections.[1] Another characteristic of this poetry was its scholasticism leading to subtlety of thought and illustration, to allegory and to personification, though these latter are common to other forms of mediæval literature. All these things are sometimes denominated Platonism; and if we recognize that this is not the Platonism of the Greeks, however derivative in certain qualities, we have enough for our present purpose. It was in the beautiful and sublimely spiritual poetry of the *Vita Nuova* of Dante that this cult of idealized love found its ultimate expression. When we turn to Petrarch we find that the ideals of the Renaissance had superseded those of mediævalism; but it is not as if these finer ideals had never existed. Petrarch, like Dante, celebrated in his sonnets an ideal passion; but while Dante, in the white heat of a passionate devotion to his Beatrice, reaches the ecstasy of the saint, intensity of passion in Petrarch dethrones at times his goddess Laura, however elsewhere exalted by the hyperbole of her lover's exquisite poetry. Petrarch is finished in diction, possessed of a ruling sense of design and skilful in the adornment of his verse with mythological and classical allusions. He is original in his employment of metaphor, which he occasionally carries to a degree of logical nicety that recalls mediæval allegory. Elsewhere his metaphors are fetched from afar and imaginatively wrought, leading on, in his imitators Italian and English, to the extravagance and bad taste known as "the conceit."

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[1] See J. B. Fletcher, *The Religion of Beauty in Women*, New York, 1911.

It was Petrarch that Wyatt followed, not Dante. Fifteen of the thirty-two sonnets of Wyatt are actual translations of sonnets of Petrarch and seven more are adaptations. It cannot be said that Wyatt selected Petrarch at his best or for the best that is in the Italian poet. Wyatt seems mainly to have been attracted to his originals here for the purpose of exercise and example. Metrically especially, Petrarch served him while he was working away from the old accentual system of English versification to a more careful ordering of syllables whereby in time a smoothness, not hitherto affected by English lyrists, became one of the characteristics of English verse. But Italian was not the only influence on Wyatt. While but a single sonnet of his has been traced to its actual French original, many of Wyatt's love poems show a reflection in form and sentiment of French popular poetry, and he practised the rondeau with success.[1] Historically the position of Wyatt is important, representing as he does the lyric of the twenties and thirties; intrinsically few of his imitations, repeating as they do the accepted commonplaces of other men, can be ranked very high. To speak of Wyatt even when at his best as one who surpasses Petrarch in imagination and all the English sonneteers, "till we come to Shakespeare," in passion, is to obscure the significance of words. For a dozen, or perhaps a score of his lyrics, to say nothing of his sincere and capable satire, Wyatt takes an honorable place as the earliest outrider of distinction in the brilliant procession of Elizabethan poetry so soon to follow.

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[1] On Wyatt's relations to foregoing poetry, French and Italian, see especially Padelford's Introduction, *Early Sixteenth Century Lyrics*, 1907, pp. xix-xlix.

As to Surrey, he is as genuine a disciple of Petrarch as of Wyatt. His verse belongs between 1528 and 1547, in which latter year he was executed on a trumped-up charge of treason just before King Henry's own death. A smoother and more certain metrist, Surrey had learned by Wyatt's experiments, though he reached not beyond the range of his master in theme or manner of treatment. Surrey's are the competences of expression and the refinements of the courtier. A delicate sense, too, for the influence of nature has been claimed for him and a sensitiveness to physical beauty. Wyatt and Surrey are the two particular stars of Puttenham's "new company of courtly makers," "the two chief lanterns," he elsewhere calls them, "to all others that have since employed their pens upon English poesy." The other names — Thomas, Lord Vaux, Sir Francis Bryan and Edward Somerset, Anthony Lee, brother-in-law of Wyatt, and George Boleyn, Lord Rochford, Queen Anne's brother, — none of them need concern us. Nicholas Grimald is more important; for aside from his touch with the classics and his neglect of Petrarch, Grimald was the probable editor of the first edition of *Tottel's Miscellany* (popularly so called from the publisher), the volume into which was gathered, long after their writing, the lyrical poetry of Wyatt, Surrey, and their contemporaries, besides the later verse of Grimald himself with that of some others. Tottel's is the earliest of the several poetical miscellanies of Elizabethan times. First published in 1557, just before the queen's accession, the collection went through eight editions by 1587, and was then superseded by collections of newer poetry. Still Cousin Abraham Slender was not altogether old-fashioned when, some ten years later, he exclaimed: "I had rather than forty shillings I had my *Book of Songs and Sonnets* here," for this was none other than this notable collection.

The miscellany was a favorite type of book in Elizabeth's day. It was by no means confined merely to lyrical poetry; for there was the famous *Mirror for Magistrates*, a collection of elegiac historical narratives in verse, and there were books such as *England's Parnassus* and *Belvedere or the Garden of the Muses*, both of them treasuries of poetical quotations. The idea of a miscellaneous collection of poetry seemed to have been derived from the manuscript notebooks which scholars and gentlemen of culture were accustomed to keep, in which to record their own thoughts at times, but, more commonly, some translated or transcribed bit of poetry which was passing about in literary circles and which the transcriber considered worthy of preservation. Jonson's *Timber, or Discoveries*, years later, was a commonplace book in which that worthy jotted down passages translated and expanded from his private reading; and "Shakespeare's sugared sonnets among his private friends" attest the custom of the circulation of poetry in manuscript. *Tottel's Miscellany* was followed by *The Paradise of Dainty Devices*, in 1576, which ran through nine editions by 1606; by *A Gorgeous Gallery of Gallant Inventions*, in 1578; and by Clement Robinson's *Handful of Pleasant Delights*, the only extant issue of which dates 1584. *The Paradise* contained work of William Hunnis and Richard Edwards, both of them musicians and contributors to the earliest Elizabethan drama, some verse of Gascoigne, and a poem or so by the Earl of Oxford, who enjoyed the distinction of being the enemy of Sidney. The work of these earlier miscellanies is the work of apprentices, but most of them were employed on good models. *The Paradise* is graver and more moral in tone than *Tottel; A Gorgeous Gallery* is less brilliant than its title; *A Handful of Pleasant Delights* is "a song-book rather than a book of poetry," and is supposed to have been originally licensed as early as 1561. Several charming songs are here to be found; and it may be surmised that it represents less strictly the poetry of the court than its fellow miscellanies. The interesting thing about the most popular miscellanies of Elizabethan lyrical poetry consists in the fact that they represent the selective taste of their time and bear eloquent testimony of the diffusiveness of literary taste and appreciation.

The most striking figure in English poetry between Wyatt and Spenser is that of George Gascoigne, courtier, soldier, and poet, who rejoiced in the motto *Tam Marti quam Mercurio*, and distinguished himself in the drama, in satirical and narrative poetry, as well as in the lyric. While Gascoigne in a sense continued the line of development set for the lyric by Wyatt and Surrey, he infused into his poetry a spirit far more thoroughly English and affected a return to older phrases and idioms. The smoothness and ease of Gascoigne's verse show that he gave minute attention to musical effect; and this, with a frequent happiness of figure, directness and sincerity, occasional passion and genuine force, sufficiently justify the estimation in which the poet was held in his own day. In Gascoigne the personal note becomes more pronounced. Much of his poetry is autobiographical, and all of it egotistic and personal to a degree rarely attained by the dolorous complaints of the shadowy typical lovers in *Tottel's Miscellany* and *The Paradise of Dainty Devices.*

In the year 1575 when Gascoigne, with two years yet to live, revised the earlier edition (1573) of his *Hundreth Sundry Flowers* into the *Posies of George Gascoigne,* Spenser, Greville, and Lodge were already at Cambridge and Lyly and Peele at Oxford, which Sidney had but recently quitted to come up to court and proceed upon his travels abroad. Spenser had poetized for several years and was soon to discuss with his mentor, Gabriel Harvey, momentous questions concerning English hexameters and the like. Lodge, with perhaps Greene and Watson, must have been writing poetry long before each sought in turn for literary recognition in London. Other lyrists, who had probably begun to write in the seventies, were Greville, Sidney's friend, Breton, the step-son of Gascoigne, and Munday, dramatist, pamphleteer, informer, and translator, but poet as well. Raleigh, with his high and insolent vein, was never more than an occasional visitor to the regions of the muses; and Churchyard, Turberville, Googe, translator of eclogues, all were older men and lyrical in no true sense.

But with all these younger poets preparing to burst into song, metrical experiment was still more than ever the order of the day. Gascoigne had continued the practice of the sonnet in the modified English form which Surrey had introduced. But the editor of the first edition of *Tottel*, Grimald or whoever he may have been, was so ignorant of the form of the rondeau that he was unable to preserve it in printing. In addition to the old short riming measures and ballad metres, the lyrists of the earlier anthologies adopted as a favorite the inexpressibly tiresome "poulter's measure," an alexandrine line (*i.e.*, six iambics) followed by a septenary (*i.e.*, seven), riming as a couplet, thus:

> Who justly may rejoice in ought under the sky,
> As life or lands, as friends or fruits, which only live to die?

But clearly a metre, so literally at sixes and sevens, could not long survive ridicule and parody, and few poems were written in it after the eighties. Gascoigne had declared in a sensible little treatise on the making of English verse that "ordinarily we use no foot save the iambic," though he recognized the existence of other ways of ordering syllables metrically. But long before Gascoigne's time, worthy Roger Ascham had raised the question of a possible future for English poetry, freed from "the Gothish barbarism of rime" and practising the orderly and established versification of the ancient Greeks and Romans. This subject absorbed the attention and the pens of scholars throughout Elizabeth's reign, and resulted not only in the absurdities of English hexameters, such as those of Harvey, Fraunce, and Stanihurst, but in an admirably complete series of experiments by Sidney and other members of what Harvey called the Areopagus Club. Indeed, the last word on this subject was that of the poet Daniel, who answered Campion's plea for classical lyrical measures in all but the last year of Elizabeth's reign. Experimentation with classical metres and the theories about them little affected the history of the lyric. It was otherwise with the similar experimentation of Sidney and Watson in the lyrical forms of Italian poetry.[1]

With the year 1580, the daylight of Elizabethan literature was pouring in flood and the lyric chorus was in full throat. And now the inventive fancy of the age in seeking for expression hit upon certain literary modes, often trying one for the nonce to the partial exclusion of others, and, wearying of it, turning to something new. In the lyric the pastoral was the favorite mode up to 1590, when it was superseded by the popularity of the sonnet. Later came the heyday of poetry written specifically to be set to music. Let us turn first to the pastoral. The pastoral is not a literary form. It is really a way of looking at life artistically, and may be represented on canvas or in marble as it may be expressed by word in prose or verse of different varieties. The conventions of the pastoral ideal, with its joys of an impossible golden age, its perennial bloom and summer, its pursuing swains and coy and fleeting shepherdesses, are too well known to require repetition here. Suffice it for us to recall that pastoral poetry, like poetry of so many other forms, came late to England from Italy and France, and to recognize that the delicate and amorous sentiments, pervading the pastoral no-man's land of a pleasing but conventionalized imagination, lent themselves naturally and easily to the expression of the lighter lyrical emotions. Spenser's fine series of eclogues, *The Shepherds' Calendar*, in print by 1579 and immediately acclaimed for its excellence, had much to do with confirming the pastoral fashion. A charming feature of *The Calendar* is the several songs of great beauty and elaboration interlarded in the narrative and dialogue, all of them in the pastoral mode. Nowhere else is Spenser so full of lyrical music as in "Perigot and Willie's Roundelay," the "Canzon Pastoral" in praise of Elizabeth, or the stately "Dirge for Dido," all of them songs of *The Shepherds' Calendar*. Brevity and directness were neither of them distinguishing qualities of Spenser, and therefore we do not find him achieving his greatest success in the song as such. However lofty the thought of the "Four Hymns" in honor of earthly and of heavenly love and beauty, they are, when all has been said, little more than a rendering in noble verse of the Platonic ideas on these subjects, examined through the lenses of Ficino's commentary. Lyrical in a deeper and wider sense than the songs of *The Calendar*, though equally in the pastoral mode, are the "Prothalamion" and "Epithalamion" (the latter signalizing his own wedding), with their splendid sweep of intricate stanza sustained with masterly effect and their charming, recurrent musical refrains. Happier than Spenser in this matter of brevity and directness was Sidney, although the experimental character of the songs of the *Arcadia*, modelled, as so many of them are, on exotic foreign models — the madrigal, the sestina, *terza rima*, to say no more of classical experiments — precluded in most of Sidney's pastoral lyrics more than a qualified success. It is, indeed, to lesser men that we must look for the perfection of the Elizabethan lyric in the pastoral mode. It was Breton who sang:

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[1] On the general subject, see the present writer's *Poetic and Verse Criticism of the Reign of Queen Elizabeth*, 1891.

> In the merry month of May,
> In a morn by break of day,
> With a troop of damsels playing
> Forth the wood forsooth a Maying;

and how, "in time of yore,"

> Yea and nay was thought an oath
> That was not to be doubted.

It was Marlowe who offered his shepherdess love,

> A cap of flowers and a kirtle
> Embroidered all with leaves of myrtle;
>
> A gown made of the finest wool
> Which from our pretty lambs we pull;

Fur-linèd slippers for the cold
With buckles of the purest gold.

And it was Greene who asks:

If country loves such sweet desires do gain,
What lady would not love a shepherd swain?

Among the poets to live long after this period in which the pastoral ruled over lyrical poetry, none continued the mode so persistently nor so imbued his work with its spirit as Michael Drayton, for his talents and originality ever to be regarded as the greatest of the followers of Spenser. Drayton's first secular work, *The Shepherd's Garland*, 1593, is entirely in the pastoral mode; and while he wandered far from lyrical poetry in his various historical endeavors, narrative and other, much of the embellishment of his famous *Polyolbion*, and of his fairy-poem the *Nymphidia*, *The Owl*, a bird-fable, and *The Man in the Moon*, a version of the story of Endymion, is of the pastoral, at times distinctly of the lyrical, kind. Again and again Drayton reaches lyrical success within the strictest limitations of the lyrical art and alike within and beyond the conventional bounds of lyrical subject-matter. The "Song to Sirena," and the odes "To the Cambro-Britans," on "Agincourt," and "To the Virginian Voyage" alone sufficiently attest this, even if we omit to mention the famous sonnet "Since there's no help," in which Drayton tries conclusions, and successfully, with his personal friend, Shakespeare. It is not to be wondered that, next to Spenser, Drayton was the most popular general poet of his day.

With some exceptions, the choicest Elizabethan lyrics in the pastoral mode were gathered into the volume known as *England's Helicon*, edited by John Bodenham in 1600 and reprinted in 1614. Besides the greater names of Spenser and Sidney, here are to be found lyrics of Munday, Breton, Constable, and Greene, of Drayton, Lodge, Peele, Barnfield, and many others. While the pastoral character is pervasive in *England's Helicon*, some earlier poems even being "pastoralized" by such substitutions as *swain* for *man*, or *shepherd* for *lover*, to conform to the current fancy, there are many poems of a less specialized type, and some marking the more recent interest in the sonnet. *England's Helicon* borrowed from *The Phœnix Nest*, a miscellany printed in 1593, containing many poems of Lodge and Breton. Both of these collections disclose a very direct contact with foreign models alike in the titles of poems and in their metrical and stanzaic forms. Sonnet is applied to anything; madrigal, ode, and song are employed with equal looseness; occasionally idyl, barginet (*i.e.*, bergeret), canzon, are used with "pastoral," as pastoral sonnet, pastoral ode, canzon pastoral, or simply pastoral. Several titles of pastoral songs are derived from popular terms for dances: as the jig, a merry irregular song in short measure, more or less comic, sometimes sung and danced by the clown to an accompaniment of pipe and tabor; the *braule*, in English brawl, similarly a dance of lively nature; the roundelay, a light poem, originally a shepherd's dance, in which a phrase is repeated, often as a verse or stanzaic refrain. Several titles in these collections are English, however translated from foreign languages: such is the passion, affected by Watson, contention, complaint, lament, all sufficiently clear in meaning, however carelessly employed. The only metre which can be affirmed to have become in any wise identified with the pastoral mode, is the octosyllabic iambic measure, riming either in couplets or alternating with its derivative, heptasyllabic trochaics. Both measures are frequently employed by Breton; the latter is the metre of Barnfield's famous "Ode," "As it fell upon a day," long erroneously attributed to Shakespeare.[1]

A favorite little verse form of the period was the madrigal. Originally an Italian shepherd's song, the madrigal had a technical significance in music as in verse. In the latter, while the term was employed with much looseness, the madrigal may be defined as a short integral poem of lyrical or epigrammatic character, made up usually of a system of tercets followed by one or more couplets, the verses commonly of two different lengths and varied independently of the rimes, which, after the genius of Italian, are preferably feminine. Thus,

> Say gentle nymphs, that tread these mountains,
>   Whilst sweetly you sit playing,
>   Saw you my Daphne straying
>
> Along your crystal fountains?
>   If that you chance to meet her,
>   Kiss her and kindly greet her;

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[1] See Arber's reprint of Barnfield, *English Scholars' Library*, No. 14, 1882, pp. xix ff.

Then these sweet garlands take her,
And say for me, I never will forsake her.

Favorable specimens of the madrigal may be found in Nicholas Yonge's *Musica Transalpina*, 1588, and Thomas Watson's *First Set of Italian Madrigals Englished*, 1590. Indeed, both of these books purport to be no more than translations of well-known song-books by Marenzio, Converso, and other Italian composers.[1] With the song-books of William Byrd, publisher, musician, possibly poet as well, the adaptation of the madrigal by English poets and musicians set in. In the many song-books that followed, the work of Est, Morley, Wilbye, Dowland, Jones, Weelkes, Hume, and many others, the term madrigal vies with song, air, ballad, ballet, canzon and canzonet, to designate any lyric set to music.

To return to the immediate influence of contemporary Italian forms of verse on the Elizabethan lyric, besides Sidney, the most important of these experimenters was Thomas Watson, just mentioned for his *Madrigals Englished.* In addition to this work, Watson published his *Passionate Century of Love* in 1582, and, in 1593, his *Tears of Fancy*. Watson is not only a Petrarchist, but a scholar well versed in the classics; and he levies on French contemporary poets as well. Happily for later scholarship, there was enough of the pedant in Watson to cause him carefully to name his sources. As to form, Watson's lyrics are largely irregular "sonnets" of eighteen lines. His work is negligent and his merit as a poet lies little beyond what he was able to take over from the foreign coffers that he rifled so frankly. Far more purely Italianate and consummate as a metrist was Barnabe Barnes who, in his *Parthenope and Parthenophil*, published in 1593, continues the Italian impulse of Sidney. *Parthenope and Parthenophil* purports to be a sequence of sonnets, but interspersed are many canzons, sestinas, and odes in the rich and exuberant manner of the Renaissance Italian poets, rather than a mere borrowing of their ideas and phrases. Of these three experimenters in the grafting of Italian poetry on the stock of the English lyric, Watson translates and little more; Barnes successfully reaches the form of his models; Sidney alone assimilates their spirit to the emotional processes of his own genius. In order of priority in time, these poets range, Sidney, Watson, Barnes; in order of poetic value the last two change places and stand below and apart from the eminence of their great fellow.

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[1] On this topic see F. I. Carpenter, "Thomas Watson's Italian Madrigals Englished, 1590," *Journal of Germanic Philology*, II, 323.

The spirit of mid-Elizabethan lyrical poetry is the spirit of youth and the joy, the inconsequence, and the unconsciousness of youth. This poetry is pagan, carefree, little oppressed with the problems of life, frank in its cult of beauty and in its delight in the brave shows of the world. It revels in the art of song, in variety and experiment in verse, in the artifices of style; it plays upon words and elaborates ingenious figures of speech; it bubbles with voluble joy or, if cast down, its despair or petulance are those of childhood. An unknown poet of *England's Helicon* sings:

Praised be Diana's faire and harmless light,
Praised be the dews wherewith she moists the ground,
Praised be her beams, the glory of the night,
Praised be her power, by which all powers abound.

In heaven queen she is among the spheres,
She mistress-like makes all things to be pure:
Eternity in her oft change she bears;
She beauty is, by her the fair endure.

And Thomas Lodge describes the Rosalind, on which Shakespeare was later to model Orlando's Rosalind, in this ecstasy of a lover's delight:

With orient pearl, with ruby red,
  With marble white, with sapphire blue
Her body every way is fed,
  Yet soft in touch and sweet in view:
    Heigh ho, fair Rosaline!

Nature herself her shape admires;
  The gods are wounded in her sight;
And love forsakes his heavenly fires
  And at her eyes his brand doth light:
    Heigh ho, would she were mine!

But there were graver notes even in this early concert of joy. Fulke Greville, boyhood friend of Sidney, left behind him, years later, a miscellaneous collection of poetry mostly lyrical, much of which must have been written in the days of the Areopagus. *Cœlica*, as this collection is called, is only in part lyrical and remarkably free from foreign and extraneous influences, metrical or other. Many of these poems are characterized by a depth and intricacy of thought that suggest the manner of

Donne a little later. But Greville's ponderings led him from the lyric into poetical disquisitions and into statecraft; Donne retained his lyricism in the eloquence of the pulpit. Another Elizabethan, to whom poetry was the means to a more serious end than art, was Father Southwell, one of the Jesuit brethren who gave at last his life to the cause of turning England back to the older faith. Southwell wrote in old-fashioned metres and was as unaffected as Greville by the prevalent Italianism, pastoralism, and other passing poetical fashions, with the exception of one, the "conceit." How it came to pass that the splendid courtier Sidney, responsible for the Petrarchan conceit in English poetry, should have claimed, as one of the earliest and most certain of his disciples in this respect, the holy Father Southwell, is one of the things difficult for ingenious scholarship to explain. To Southwell the lyric was a means to the worship of God and to the uplift of the human soul struggling among the snares and sorrows of the world. The lavishing on his work of a fervid and ingenious imagination dignifies Southwell at times with the utterance of a true poet. Many a poet of the day turned from the vanities of worldly poetry to express religious feeling in song or to translate or imitate the *Psalms* of David, those accepted realizations of poetic fervency and devotion. None the less Southwell stands forth conspicuously among Elizabethans as the only poet of rank who devoted his art undividedly to what was then called "divine uses."

The conceit has already been several times mentioned in these pages and the subject calls for discrimination. A conceit, in the parlance of the old poets, was any striking, apt, or original figure of speech employed to illustrate or beautify a passage rhetorically, whether in verse or in prose. Obviously this perfectly reasonable effort was prone from the first to degenerate into extravagance and effort, in which the thought was apt to be lost in the illustration. Thus when the ink that Sidney uses runs by its nature into Stella's name, when pain moves his pen, and the paper is pale with despair, we have conceit pure and simple, though doubtless born naturally enough, as elsewhere in Sidney, of a poet's quick discernment of likenesses and association of remote ideas. No less extravagant is Juliet's wish that Night should take Romeo and

> cut him out in little stars,
> And he will make the face of heaven so fine
> That all the world will be in love with night;
> And pay no worship to the garish sun;

though here even more certainly do we feel that the intensity of Juliet's passion is such that a trifle like this, bizarre though it certainly is, is carried naturally on the impetuous current of her thoughts. When we turn to some of the ingenuities of Donne — that of the compass for example, in the famous "Valediction forbidding Mourning," prolonged, effectively it must be confessed, through three or four stanzas — we do not feel quite so sure. And yet the habit of Donne's mind was subtle and this particular poem is exquisitely sincere. Southwell likens the tears of Christ to the pools of Heshbon, baths where happy spirits dive; and, in throes of spiritual unworthiness, tells how he drinks drops of the heavenly flood and bemires his Maker with returning mud. And yet the cause of these conceits may be attributable to many things beside mere carelessness or bad taste. Sidney lavished metaphor on his poetry, as on his prose, and failed at times, from a romantic spirit that could brook no restraint, to discriminate or exercise his taste. A similar obliviousness to the means of reaching his end characterizes the extravagant figures in the poetry of Southwell. On the other hand, other poets, especially later ones, are often deliberately ingenious and the effect is that of an imagination, mediocre at best, taxed to its extreme effort. It is difficult to believe that an allusion by Lynche, one of the minor sonneteers, to

> The tallest ship that cuts the angry wave
> And plows the seas of Saturn's second sun,

was not ingeniously wrought out, not without labor, as Jonson would have put it, on the anvil of thought. So, too, Cowley's words of the artificers who cut the wooden images that adorned the temple of Jerusalem, that they

> Carve the trunks and breathing shapes bestow,
> Giving the trees more life than when they grow,

is assuredly not a thought that could have occurred offhand, or unpremeditated, or to any one whose avowed quest was not the saying of something in a manner in which it had not been said before. That which men do naturally they do with grace. Excessive effort is commonly awkward. Hence the frequent unhappiness of the conceit when it became a matter of inventive preparation, not an extravagance born of uncontrolled imagination; hence its frequent preposterousness and want of taste. It is a mistake to ascribe the introduction of the conceit to any one English poet, or to hold that Gongora, Marino, or any other foreign poet is specifically responsible for it in English literature. The conceit developed under the influence of Petrarch, whose personal good taste for the most part preserved him from its excesses. It was the Petrarchists, whether in Italy, France, or England, that countenanced and developed the conceit in their endeavor to outdo the hyperbole of their master's ingenious imagery.

There were other artificialities besides the conceit in the poetry of Elizabeth's time which may be studied in Sidney and many of his successors. One was the echo-sonnet. Another construction was the sheaf, as it has been called, in which a series of comparisons are made in succession, gathered together and then applied in an equal number of applications. An elaborate development of this ingenuity is to be found in a poem of two long stanzas by Edmund Bolton entitled "A Palinode," in which such a series of similitudes with their applications are bandied back and forth several times with an inventive cleverness fully justified in a happy and not unpoetic result.

As withereth the primrose by the river,
As fadeth summer's sun from gliding fountains,
As vanisheth the light-blown bubble ever,

As melteth snow upon the mossy mountains:
So melts, so vanisheth, so fades, so withers,
The rose, the shine, the bubble, and the snow,
Of praise, pomp, glory, joy, which short life gathers,
Fair praise, vain pomp, sweet glory, brittle joy.
The withered primrose by the mourning river,
The faded summer's sun from weeping fountains,
The light-blown bubble vanishèd for ever,
The molten snow upon the naked mountains,
Are emblems that the treasures we uplay,
Soon wither, vanish, fade, and melt away.[1]

The game is further pursued, and to its logical finish, in a second stanza of equal elaboration. But this should suffice for what the more serious spirits of the time very properly called "these toys."

The form specifically consecrated to serious lyrical expression in the last decade of Elizabeth's reign was the sonnet. We have noted that Wyatt is responsible for the introduction of the sonnet into English; Surrey for that change in the arrangement of rimes that transformed it into a series of three alternately riming quatrains concluded with a couplet. Sidney practised the sonnet in nearly every variety of rime-arrangement which the ingenuity of Italian (and French) sonneteers had invented before him. And to Sidney must be referred the first writing in English of a series or sequence of sonnets devoted to the details of the progress of an affair of the heart. Sidney's sonnet sequence, *Astrophel and Stella*, was most probably written during the years 1581, 1582, and the earlier part of 1583. It was not published until the year 1591, three years after the poet's death, and then by Nash, the procurer of the copy. The story conveyed in *Astrophel and Stella* purports to be the autobiography of Sidney's love for Lady Penelope Devereux, whom he lost by not knowing his own heart. The lady contracted an unhappy marriage with Lord Rich, and Sidney subsequently married a daughter of Sir Francis Walsingham. Indubitably Sidney would never thus have addressed Penelope Devereux had not the cult of Platonic love descended to him through Petrarch and the rest of the Italian and French sonneteers as one of the received literary fashions of his time. But it scarcely follows therefore that the poignant touches of feeling in which these sonnets abound must be interpreted merely as evanescent lyrical expressions of the new cult.[1] Even less justifiable seems the attitude that shudders at a story which, taken in its entirety, is singularly pure and elevated above the sordid pruriency of a vulgar liaison. Indeed, these sonnets produce in the reader who is unbiassed by preconceptions and scholarly ratiocinations, the effect of a page from an actual lover's story, and it is difficult, in view of the manner of man that we know Sidney to have been — his directness, his honesty and integrity, his outspokenness, and need for expression in art — to accept his sonnets for anything else. In his art, however, Sidney is frankly a Petrarchist, and to him is to be referred, as already suggested, the popularizing of "the conceit." But to Sidney is likewise referable the elevation of the sonnet into one of the supreme utterances of English lyrical emotion; for metaphor, ingenuity, and toying with the word are banished again and again in the intense lyrical moments of Sidney's poetry.

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[1] See F. E. Schelling, *A Book of Elizabethan Lyrics*, Boston, 1895, p. 110.

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[1] See especially J. B. Fletcher, "Did Sidney love Stella," reprinted in his volume, *The Religion of Beauty in Woman*; and S. Lee, *Elizabethan Sonnets*, 1904, Westminster, i, xliii, who denies to the series "any serious autobiographical significance." The argument of Fletcher from the analogy of Shakespeare's sincere representation of the passion of Romeo and Juliet seems to the present writer hardly in point. Sidney was not a dramatist, nor did he pretend to be one. Whether other men wrote sonnets to ladies whom we may discover, as Byron discovered Junius, to be "nobody at all," is nothing to the purpose.

With the publication of Sidney's *Astrophel*, the sonnet craze is upon us, and every poetling before long was trying his 'prentice hand and simulating the throes and agonies of the lyric of love with the intervention of clever Italians and Frenchmen who had done the thing so well before him. It has recently been shown that the French lyrical poets were imitated and translated quite as much as the Italian by the lyrists of the age of Elizabeth, and that much of the Petrarchism of the sonneteers came deviously to England by way of French intermediaries.[1] Thus the three earliest sonnet sequences of any importance to follow Sidney, Daniel's *Delia*, Constable's *Diana*, and Drayton's *Idea* (all in print by 1594), took over the titles respectively of the *Delie* of Séve, the *Diane* of Desportes, and *l'Idée* of Claude de Pontuox; and their titles were not their only borrowings. Lodge, in his *Phillis Honored with Pastoral Sonnets*, 1593, is the arch purveyor of lyrical merchandise which by the strict decalogue of modern criticism — a decalogue as unknown to the poets as to the buccaneers of Elizabeth's time — should be labelled "made in France." *Delia* is graceful and conventional like the rest of Daniel's poetry and distinguished at times by a fine aptitude for the phrase. Drayton has already received mention among the pastoralists as one of the earliest and most successful of the followers of Spenser. In his *Idea's Mirror* (often reprinted) he is alike more original and more unequal than Daniel, but achieves at times some of the finest sonnets of his time. After the sonnets of Sidney and Shakespeare, the *Amoretti* are less specifically imitative while quite as Italianate as the minor sequences. As to the significance of Spenser's sonnets at least we are in no danger of going astray. They were addressed to Elizabeth Boyle, the lady whom the poet courted and won for his wife, and require neither symbolism, theory, nor destructive ingenuity to elucidate or explain to naught their indubitable meaning.

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[1] On the general subject see A. H. Upham, *The French Influence in English Literature*, 1908, pp. 81 ff.; Lee, *The French Renaissance in England*, 1910, pp. 255 ff.; and L. E. Kastner, in the *Modern Language Review*, October, 1907, to January, 1910.

The greater number of sonnet sequences are amorous, ordered to tell with more or less distinctness a story of courtship having its basis in actual fact, more frequently disjointed or purely fanciful, sometimes little more than a collection of independent sonnets on the common theme of love. But the Elizabethan sonnet was devoted to other services than those of Venus. An interesting series of sonnets, dedicatory, and occasional, might be garnered from the books of the age, and the devotional sonnet finds a respectable representation in Constable's *Spiritual Sonnets*, 1593, Barnes's *Divine Century of Spiritual Sonnets*, 1595, and in the scattered sonnets on religious subjects by Donne and several lesser men. Finally, Chapman in a *Coronet for his Mistress Philosophy*, 1594, eloquently criticises the exclusion of more serious themes from the love poetry of the day, and Sir John Davies (himself the author of an ingenious and poetical series of acrostics on Queen Elizabeth's name, *Astræa*), in his *Gulling Sonnets*, of the next year, laughs at the whole craze and parodies it.

Nor was the conventional sonnet of the age an unfit theme for satire, with its lists of the beloved's perfections, its hackneyed or else contorted and far-fetched imagery, its unoriginality and tiresome repetitions. Daniel thus sings with the sweet average sentimentality of his kind:

> Restore thy tresses to the golden ore,
> Yield Cytherea's son those arcs of love,
> Bequeath the heavens the stars that I adore,
> And to the orient do thy pearls remove,
> Yield thy hands' pride unto the ivory white,
> To Arabian odors give thy breathing sweet,
> Restore thy blush unto Aurora bright,
> To Thetis give the honor of thy feet;
> Let Venus have thy graces her resigned,
> And thy sweet voice give back unto the spheres;
> But yet restore thy fierce and cruel mind
> To Hyrcan tigers and to ruthless bears;

Yield to the marble thy hard heart again:
So shalt thou cease to plague, and I to pain.

On which Jonson saturninely remarks: "You that tell your mistress, her beauty is all composed of theft; her hair stole from Apollo's goldy-locks; her white and red, lilies and roses stolen out of Paradise; her eyes two stars, plucked from the sky; her nose the gnomen of Love's dial that tells you how the clock of your heart goes" and so on.[1] The overwrought similitudes of the tribe of sonneteers, master though he was himself of all their ingenious graces, stung Shakespeare likewise to these honest words:

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;
Coral is far more red than her lips' red;
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.
I have seen roses damask'd red and white,
But no such roses see I in her cheeks;
And in some perfumes is there more delight
Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.
I love to hear her speak, yet well I know
That music hath a far more pleasing sound ;
I grant I never saw a goddess go,
My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground;
And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare
As any she belied with false compare.

Still, in aptness of word, happiness of phrase, in beauty of sentiment, and occasional nobility of thought it would be difficult to find anywhere, even with the two or three greatest names omitted, a body of lyrical verse the equal of the Elizabethan sonnet. Daniel, Donne, Drayton,

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[1] See Daniel, *Delia*, sonnet XIX, and Jonson, *Cynthia's Revels*, V, iv.

Barnes, Barnfield, Lodge, and even at times lesser men, practised the sonnet in this age with a mastery of technique and a perfection of expression which remains the despair of our own metrically less facile time.

Recalling the poetic fervor of Sidney, the grace and beauty of Spenser's *Amoretti*, and the many excellences and felicities of the minor sonneteers, the master sonnet sequence of the age was of course Shakespeare's, whose *Sonnets* were printed in 1609, well after the fashion had waned, although mostly written within the closing decade of the old queen's reign. About Shakespeare's *Sonnets*, as about everything else Shakespearean, there has been doubt, mystery, construction and demolition of theory, with endless argument, rejoinder and surrejoinder. Theories on the subject need little concern us here; the facts are disputed and most of the inferences by someone denied. The sonnets, as we have them, are made up of two series: the first and shorter addressed to a youth in a tone of adulation, unusual in any age, impossible in ours; the second addressed to a dark and imperious lady in a desperate abandonment to passion. Who these personages were — if, indeed, they were other than creatures of that fertile dramatic imagination that was Shakespeare's — we really do not know; and one of many guesses is at least as good as any other where evidences are so slight and theorizing so easy. It is to be remembered that among all men that have written, Shakespeare most readily could have achieved that "notable feigning" that "gives to airy nothing a local habitation and a name";

and that it is no more remarkable that he should have written a sequence of sonnets that throb with a passion that persuades wise men that they are autobiographical than that he should have depicted, again and again, with equal cogency and vivacity, tales of passion whose known sources assure us of their objectivity. If we must accept the *Sonnets* of Shakespeare as a page from the history of his own heart, terrible although their revelation, they leave no impression of a permanent perversion of that clear insight into life, such as too often follows an enslavement to sin with its consequent distortion of the features of good and evil. No question in poetry is more difficult than the relations of artistic expression to subjective reality, and on none is it easier or more futile to dogmatize. A subjective interpretation of the *Sonnets* of Shakespeare is not demanded by the facts as we know them, by the poetical practices of the time, or by any analogy to be derived from the author's life or from his dramatic endeavors. It remains for us to give the greatest interpreter of the passions of men the benefit of that charity which we extend to lesser men, and to affirm that there is nothing to necessitate an autobiographical interpretation of these incomparable sonnets of passion. Shakespeare's *Sonnets* are by no means all of equal poetic value; but the best, for depth and fullness of thought, for mastery of poetical phrase, at times for the white heat of passion and perfection of literary finish, rise above the erotic poetry of their own age as they serve yet for the goal and ultimate exemplar of their kind.

The lyrical poetry of Shakespeare, however, is not confined to the sonnets, but recurs again and again both in the songs of the plays and in the small number of poems attributed to him in *The Passionate Pilgrim* and in Chester's *Love's Martyr*. The range of Shakespeare as a lyrist, if we include the deeper tones of the sonnets, is almost that of Shakespeare the dramatist. Indeed, few moods are untouched in the lyrics of the plays, which range from Autolycus with his balladry of the fair and country-side and the snatches of folk-song which add pathos to the sad plight of Ophelia, to the sea-knell of *The Tempest* and the exquisite funeral song of Imogen. Nor are the metrical settings of Shakespeare's lyrics less varied than the moods that they celebrate; and the form is always fitted to the theme. In an age when every dramatist could turn a lyric to serve his purpose, Shakespeare excelled all competitors, and this less by sheer originality than by the power, equally exemplified in his dramas, of furnishing artistic raiment to traditional material. Again and again Shakespeare takes some unconsidered trifle of folk-song and transmutes it into a thing of permanent poetic value, or works over some hackneyed theme, giving to it with a new form a currency for all time. In the lyric as elsewhere, it is not so much the possession of new or startling qualities that characterizes the artistic endowment of Shakespeare as it is the superlative degree in which he is endowed with qualities which are ordinarily associated with the sanity of talent as contrasted with the abnormality of genius. It is the artistic address, the naturalness and reasonableness with which he employs what is his and what has been other men's, that is alike the despair of imitation and analysis.

There remains one lyrist, strictly of the reign of Elizabeth, who added to the concert of his time a new and original note. This was John Donne, later the famous doctor of divinity and Dean of St. Paul's. In his earlier years the poetry of Donne was wholly secular and free, save for conceits, from the dominant influences that characterized his contemporaries. Donne, who was nine years younger than Shakespeare, enjoyed unusual advantages in his education at Oxford and in the private study of languages, divinity, and dialectics. Possessed of a competence, Donne passed his time as a gentleman of fashion and made an early reputation as a wit and a poet. His poetry, indeed, seems to have been well known before any of it had appeared in print; and later his romantic love-match and his call to the church years after, enhanced his reputation for a kind of poetry which the years of his gravity and churchmanship would fain have disavowed. The lyrical poetry of Donne is to be found in his songs and sonnets, his divine poems, and in *The Anatomy of the World*, — in his elegies, his epithalamia, even to a certain extent in his satires and letters in verse. Indeed, if we are to lay stress on the subjective quality of the lyric, Donne is lyrical throughout. In the songs and sonnets Donne's subject is love, in which he appears to have experimented in his youth, impelled less, we may believe, by his passions than by a certain curiosity which led him likewise into the study of mediæval sciences and into the byways of heretical divinity. There is a subtle and original cynicism, with all their passion, about many of these love lyrics, a weird intensity and abandon, such as English poetry had not known before Donne's time. But with respect to his cynicism and scepticism as to human passion, it is to be remembered that no lyrist has so glorified the constancy and devotion of pure love as Donne, whose own life exemplified alike its beauty and its glory. In *The Anatomy of the World* the theme is death in its abstract and universal significance, despite the circumstance that the poem was undertaken as a tribute to the memory of a young maiden, Mistress Elizabeth Drury, whom, characteristically, Donne had never even so much as seen. The two "Anniversaries," as the parts are called, make this a sustained poem of considerable length in decasyllabic couplets. None the less, it would be difficult to find a purer specimen of the lyric of intellectualized emotion, sublimed to the abstract.

The lyrical poetry of Donne is characterized by several qualities not known to the Renaissance spirit of the Petrarchists, the pastoralists, and the sonneteers. For example, he rejects most of the poetical furniture, so to speak, in the houses of the poets. He cares nothing for the descriptive epithet drawn from life or for the accepted poetical diction of choice, archaic, and euphonious words, or for the garniture of classical story and allusion. Equally free is he from the slightest interest in nature or in similitudes drawn from nature; while as to man in relation to man, it may be affirmed that Donne is freer from any touch of the dramatic than any other poet of his time or perhaps any English poet of any other time. In place of all these things discarded, he enriched the lyrical poetry of his day with a new poetic style of surprising directness, with a vocabulary free from the accepted smoothness and over-indulgence in figure, and with a versification, abrupt and harsh at times, but always vigorous. Donne applied to the lyric the freedom, in a word, of the best dramatic verse of his day. Above all, he furnished lyrical poetry with a totally new order of metaphor, drawn from his study of the dialectics of divinity and especially from the technical nomenclature of contemporary science. In the difficult and often recondite allusions of Donne's poetry the literature of his successors found a new and undiscovered mine, and his influence became patent and widespread in the lyric almost before he could have been well aware of it himself. To Donne, his total break with the past, his mannerisms, ingenious similitudes, even, to some extent, his cynicism — however some of it may have been an affectation of his wit — were genuine and innate qualities of his genius; in his imitators they often degenerated into sheer mannerism and into a struggle after the ingenious and that which had never been said before. It was this that led, years after, to the indiscriminate dubbing of this whole poetical perversity by the title, "the metaphysical school of poetry." Donne is distinguishable from the Petrarchists that went before, as he is distinguishable from the "metaphysicals" that came after. He is a notable poet whose lyrical art stands equally in contrast with the refined worship of beauty idealized that characterized Spenser, and with the sweeter music and more consummate artistry of the lyrical poetry of Shakespeare.

In contemplating the lyrical activity of the reign of Queen Elizabeth, a striking feature is the general diffusion of the gift of song. Poetry occupied the statesman in the hours of his diversion and lured the scholar from his books; it solaced the prisoner in his cell and quickened the devotions of the churchman and the martyr. Nobles and councilors of state, such as Oxford and Essex, courtiers like Sidney and Raleigh, shared this gift with the playwrights, pamphleteers, and musicians, with Dekker, Greene, Nash, Dowland, Campion, and lesser men. Indeed, to few among the greater poets of the day was the gift of song denied; and effort, in even the least, not infrequently achieved success. Greville, pondering on philosophical statecraft; Daniel and Drayton, engaged in turning English history into verse, the latter for years bending his poetical talents to the topographical glorification of every hill and stream of his beloved country; Chapman, laborious translator and dramatist, poet of difficult epicedes and occasional verses — each could write a lyric with admirable success, though Chapman, for the most part, stood aloof from so trivial an employment of the divine gift of poetry. To say nothing of the fine mass of anonymous verse to be found in almost any lyrical anthology of the time, the ordinarily uninspired, who toiled with pedestrian muse along the trodden highways of contemporary literary production, were visited at times by genuine inspiration and reached, each beyond himself, to excellence. Thus Joshua Sylvester, devoted translator of him whom the age called "the divine Du Bartas," wrote one sonnet, "Were I as base as is the lowly plain," which is worth all his religious epical labors; Samuel Rowlands, hack-pamphleteer, is author of a charming lullaby; and many a name, otherwise unknown, is memorable for a single poem. On the other hand, not less striking is the range of topic included in this remarkable body of verse. Of the erotic lyric with its myriad changes of mood we have heard, and of hymn and song uplifted to the expression of religious emotion. But Dekker sang, with a music all but perfect, of vice and virtue as the world rates them, and of that "sweet content" which his life of incessant care and sorrow could so little have known. It was Nash, master that he was of the vituperative journalism of the pamphlet, who sang now blithely of the springtime in London streets, now in terms funereal of that terrible visitant, the plague that depopulated the city and drove thousands into exile. And it was Drayton, about the close of the reign, who epitomized the national pride and patriotism that had begotten the splendid line of the chronicle plays on the deeds of English kings, in the fine martial "Ode" on the Battle of Agincourt wherein we hear the very tread of armies. And yet this variety of subject, form, and treatment, with all its ingeniousness and originality at times, is often marred by inequality in execution, a tendency on the part of the minor poets to a reiteration of thought and figure, and to a highly conventionalized diction. This literature has been called a literature of great impact; and it must be confessed that again and again we find a splendid opening or a perfect initial stanza spoiled by flagging effort, overdone or negligently slighted to an inadequate conclusion. But this was to be anticipated in the poetry of a vigorous and imaginative adolescence; and, when all is said, it is amazing to what an extent the lyrical poetry of this age remains vital and fraught with a poetic message as sure, as precious, and as fruitful as when it sprang from the hearts and brains of its ardent and buoyant creators.

CHAPTER IV

THE LYRIC IN THE REIGNS OF THE FIRST TWO STUART MONARCHS

THE conditions that made the lyric of the latter years of Elizabeth what it was continued into the reign of King James, although the pastoral lyric, save for some reminiscences of poets such as Drayton and Browne of Tavistock, was now definitely a thing of the past, and no sequence of sonnets of any importance (if we except those of two belated Scotchmen, Drummond and Stirling) dates later in composition than 1600. The song-books, however, continued in ever increasing popularity, and among the musicians who were also their own poets in these dainty products of the wedded arts, Thomas Campion appeared, the most successful writer of songs of his age. Campion, like his tutelary god Apollo, combined with his lyrical art and music, repute as a physician as well. He had written a successful work on counterpoint and had fired a last gun in favor of classical versification applied to English poetry. With the inconsistency of a true artist he now demonstrated his ability to write charmingly in the usually accepted English lyrical measures, exhibiting a lightness of touch and a metrical competency that place him first among the lyrists of his particular class. Campion seems more the disciple of Catullus and Anacreon and less an imitator of Petrarch and the French and Italian Petrarchists than most of his brethren. He is neither deep nor troubled with questionings even in his sweet and grave poems that treat of religious themes. While not a mere hedonist, from being which, with its often attendant grossness, Campion's delicate taste preserves him, his sentiments are always those of a lover and worshipper of beauty, however he may breathe in with his enjoyment thereof the sense of its fragility and vanity. In Campion, as was to be expected, the words are always put together with a sense of their value in song; and his *Airs*, of which he produced no less than four books up to 1619, display an equal recognition of the art of song in its verbal applications. As we turn over the song-books of Campion's many imitators and rivals, we meet with the names of Dowland, Weelkes, Hume, Bateson, Robert Jones, and many more. John Dowland was a lutenist, famous at home and abroad, an artist who betrayed those mixed traits of the artistic temperament which are so trying at times to the less gifted. Of Hume all we know is that he is described as a captain; of Jones only that several of the lyrics of his song-books are of unusual loveliness. To what extent these cultivated musicians were their own poets, as certainly was true of Campion, we are not definitely informed. Among the poets of the early days of James who achieved for themselves success was William Drummond, the Scottish friend of Jonson, whose lyrical verse was collected and published in 1616, the year of the death of Shakespeare. Drummond is a belated Petrarchist and follower of Sidney and the sonneteers. He exhibits a certain ingenuity and poetical aptness of his own alike in subject and figure, but maintains the old-fashioned Italian forms of verse, being indeed the last writer of note to employ the madrigal. Drummond is often happily effective, if never really great. A lesser poet and even more purely imitative was Sir William Alexander of Menstrie, later Earl of Stirling, another Scotchman to follow in the wake of English lyrical fashion. His *Aurora*, a series of sonnets interspersed with songs and elegies, of uncertain date of writing, was first published in 1604. Stirling came too late and wrote too much. Many things are good in him; more, perhaps, than the casual reader might be likely to discover. Of Sir Robert Ayton, a third Scottish poet, secretary to the queen of King James, Anne of Denmark, one lyric ("I do confess thou 'rt smooth and fair") is generally known. Ayton has further been reputed (among several) the author of the original of "Auld Lang Syne."

However the rediscovery of ancient literature and art may have kindled the imagination of the Renaissance, the practice of Renaissance poets had, least of all things in it, the qualities of repose, design, and finish. Feeling and passion, the beauty of the world, and the glory and radiance of that physical beauty, these were their themes, and their spirit rode lightly the crest of the wave of the present, looking neither before nor after. Even where there is a large show of design, as in *The Faëry Queen*, and as serious and godly an intention as ever quickened the dreams of a poet, we feel that much of this is futile and that the real preoccupation of this exquisite artificer in words is in the delicate and beautiful details of the moment in which his wider purposes are only too often obscured if not totally lost. In short, the Spenserian cult of beauty, which well typifies the lesser ideals of the minor poets who were Spenser's contemporaries, is illustrated in this attitude of the devotee at beauty's altar rather than by that of the student of beauty's laws. Elaborate, pictorial is this art, subdued to the melody of words and to the delights of the senses; diffuse, ornate, and enamored of the iridescence of change and of the grace of stately motion; but careless whither it go or if the resulting narrative, description, or emotion in any wise justify its devious wanderings. This is why the Spenserians and their kind among the lyrists often know not when to hold the hand, entranced with their gentle task; why their figures of speech are lines too prolonged, their poems, stanzas in overplus, and their whole art weighted at times with the gauds and jewels of elaborate artistry to the disorder of the pattern or design. It was Donne's consciousness of all this that caused him (as we have seen), in the nineties, to discard the hallowed mannerisms of pastoralists and sonneteers. And in discarding these superficialities of style, he discarded their superficialities of thought, substituting the actual experiences and emotions of his strange personality, clothed in the stranger garb of illustration drawn from contemporary abstractions of scientific and philosophic thought. Ben Jonson, in his lyrical poetry a little later, took up a contrasted position of criticism towards the conventional lyric of the moment, a position not unlike his professional attitude towards the amateurish spirit of much of the drama contemporaneous. Ten years the junior of Shakespeare, twenty years younger than Spenser, Jonson combined a conservative temper with a classical education, less unusual in his day for its thoroughness than for the practical applications that he made of it as a poet, dramatist, and critic. To describe Jonson as a man preposterously reactionary and believing that in the ancients alone can the modern world find its guide in philosophy and in the arts, is to misread alike his general practice and his theory explicitly laid down. Not only did he know his classics and carry his knowledge with an ease acquired by few scholars, but he understood, too, the conditions of the modern world and believed that literature in England could find progress and perfection only in a development distinctly modern and English. Jonson recognized, however, that the ancients had again and again set an example and reached a success in certain forms of literature which it was well for the modern world to know and, if possible, to emulate. There was an established way of writing the epigram, for example, the satire, and the lyric, which Martial, Juvenal, Horace, and Catullus knew and practised, each in his own manner. Without merely imitating, and in no wise attempting exotic verses (which Jonson's good sense reprobated), why should not English poetry profit by such models and cease to do ignorantly and amateurishly what had already been established so well by the best literary craft? It is impossible not to sympathize with Jonson's point of view when we take into consideration, not those happy specimens of our literature that triumphed over the unstable ideals of merely romantic art, but the average wanderings of untrained talent and the slipshod art that compels us to rate so many of the Elizabethans with allowances for their inequality and grant them a qualified fame, preserved in the herbariums of the anthologies.

As we turn from the theory of Jonson to his practice of the lyric, we recognize the loss in spontaneity and naturalness which art conforming to preconceived standards must always suffer. Jonson's best lyrics are finished and informed with a sense of design; the idea is often both happy and novel, and carried out with artistic logic and insistent completeness. Metrically felicitous, impeccable in diction, possessed of grace, and at times even of lightness, there is none the less about the Jonsonian lyric a certain stiffness and artifice from which many lyrists of half his note, some of them his disciples, are happily free. Again and again, too, Jonson's lyrics trespass in their point and wit on the domain of the epigram, in which their author stands the acknowledged master of his time. The famous "Drink to me only with thine eyes," is of the essence of the epigram of compliment, and the fine contrast of "Still to be neat, still to be drest" is of much the same quality, despite the lyrical outburst of the second stanza which sinks again with the last lines to a rationalized statement.

Give me a look, give me a face,
That makes simplicity a grace;
Robes loosely flowing, hair as free:
Such sweet neglect more taketh me
Than all th' adulteries of art;
They strike mine eyes, but not my heart.

There is no tenderer little poem in the language than Jonson's "Epitaph on Salathiel Pavy, a child of Queen Elizabeth's chapel," who died when "years he numbered scarce thirteen," already famed as "the stage's jewel." At the other extreme, Jonson's lyrics touch and overlap that debatable region, the didactic, offering in poems such as the noble "Epode," "Not to know vice at all," or in the "Ode to the Memory of Sir Lucius Cary and Sir Henry Morison," the best possible examples to those who would include intellectualized sentiment in the spacious domain of lyrical poetry.

It is not growing like a tree
In bulk, doth make man better be;
Or standing long an oak, three hundred year,
To fall a log at last, dry, bald, and sere:
A lily of a day
Is fairer far in May,
Although it fall and die that night;
It was the plant and flower of light.
In small proportions we just beauties see;
And in short measures, life may perfect be.

It is in such passages as these (from the "Ode" just mentioned) that we find Jonson poetically at his best; though there are few provinces in general literature that his redoubtable energy did not essay to conquer for his own.

Jonson's lyrical poetry is contained in the sections of the folio of 1642 entitled "The Forest" and "Underwoods." His plays, and the masques in particular, yield many other examples of admirable poetry; but the songs of the masques, lyrical though they are, from their adaptation to the context and the special occasion, seldom bear excision from their places.

It would be rash to affirm that Jonson gave form to the English lyric, recalling, as we must, the metrical experiments from Wyatt to Sidney and Watson, the successes of the pastoralists, the sonneteers, and the poets who wrote lyrics to be set to music. Even Donne, anathematized as he was by Jonson for not keeping the regular tread of his measure, and misjudged by the precisians ever since, was often peculiarly happy in the choice of his stanzas and in the invention of new stanzaic forms.[1] And yet a consciousness comes into English lyrical art with Jonson, not recognizable before; for Jonson, in a sense, is the father of those light and pleasing applications of poetry to the situations and predicaments of cultivated life, the epigram, the epitaph (when not too solemn), occasional verse in its thousand applications, to which was later to be given the title *vers de société;* precisely as Jonson, in a larger sphere than that of any one form of his literary art, is the centre from which emanated the restrictive spirit in reaction against the artistic excesses of the Renaissance, the influence which, working through his imitators and disciples in ever widening circles, triumphed at the Restoration, and, if it silenced the poetry of the imagination for a time, wrought its good to the rational and critical literature of our tongue.

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[1] See, for example, W. F. Melton, *The Rhetoric of John Donne's Verse.* Baltimore, 1906.

But this new restrictive force in poetry was little felt in the earlier years of King James, with Daniel, despite a certain classical taste and reserve, writing lyrics in the approved Renaissance manner, and Drayton continuing the Spenserian pastoral. Indeed, the spirit of Spenser continued for years the most potent influence on poetry, inspiring alike the sacred and the profane allegory of Giles and Phineas Fletcher, the chorographical labors of Drayton upon his *Polyolbion*, besides his pastorals, and those of a new group of younger poets, William Browne of Tavistock, George Wither, the recently discovered William Basse, and Christopher Brooke. This school was essentially narrative, allegorical, and diffuse, and given to the cult of nature in her gentler aspects. There was not much place for the lyric among them; and yet Giles Fletcher the Younger in his *Christ's Victory and Triumph* reached excellence in one song at least, the one beginning "Love is the blossom where there blows," and his brother Phineas again and again sustains the intricate allegories of *The Purple Island* with flights of truly lyrical quality and beauty. As to the later pastoralists, just mentioned, Browne wrote charming lyrics in his *Britannia's Pastorals*, in his one masque, and elsewhere; whilst Wither, in *Fidelia*, 1615, and *Philarete*,1619, revealed a copious imagery devoted to the cult of beauty, a ready verse, and a fluency of poetic diction, quite amazing in the author of the bald religious verse that we have at his hands and the satirical and controversial Puritanism of other specimens of his work. Neither Basse nor Brooke is memorable save for his association with greater men. Commendatory verses of the former precede the first folio of Shakespeare's plays; Christopher Brooke was the friend of Donne.

If we turn now once more to "the sons of Ben" and to the disciples of Donne, we find both traceable, with certain interminglings, especially in the lyric and its kindred form, the epigram, throughout the age and quite to the Restoration. Thus Browne himself, with all his Spenser, wrote epigrams of so truly Jonsonian a model that one of them, the famous "Epitaph on the Countess of Pembroke," "Sidney's sister, Pembroke's mother," has been time out of mind erroneously attributed to Jonson.[1]

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[1] This famous epitaph was first published in Osborne's *Traditional Memoirs of the Reign of King James*, 1658, p. 78, and also included in the *Poems* of the countess's son, William Earl of Pembroke, and Sir Benjamin Rudyerd in 1660, p. 66; but "in neither volume is there any indication of authorship." Jonson's claim to it rests solely on Whalley, the editor of the first critical edition of Jonson, who alleges a tradition to the effect that Jonson wrote it, but offers no proof or reference. On the other hand, in Aubrey's *Memoirs of Natural Remarks on Wilts* (ed. Britton, 1847, p. 90), the epigram is said to have been "made by Mr. William Browne who wrote the Pastorals" (*Notes and Queries*, Ser. I, iii, 262); and Mr. Goodwin, the most recent editor of Browne, quotes the following lines from this poet's *Elegy on Charles Lord Herbert*, a grandson of the countess, to show that Browne himself alludes to his authorship of the epigram. The passage runs:

> And since my weak and saddest verse
> Was worthy thought to grace thy grandam's hearse,
> Accept of this.

Richard Brome, Jonson's body servant, lit his slender lyrical flame, like the torch of his abler comedies, at the altar of Jonson; whilst Cartwright, Randolph, and even Waller, with many lesser men, might claim the same august kinship, if not by genius, at least by adoption. Of Carew and Herrick, truest of "the sons of Ben," we shall hear more below. As to Donne, his influence, from the posturing and effort which it frequently begot in his imitators, is even more readily discernible, prompting alike the cynical note of some of Beaumont's lyrics, such ingenuities perhaps as Jonson's own "Hour-Glass" and his humorous contention that "Women are but Men's Shadows," and leading on, as we shall see, to the contortions of Quarles, the transfigured conceits of Herbert, the confusions of Crashaw, and the veritably "metaphysical poetry" of Cowley.

The old drama from the first furnished many opportunities for the writing of incidental lyrics, and there is scarcely a playwright of average reputation who has not contributed his lyrical poetry to the general flood of song. Of Shakespeare's superlative gift in this kind, note has already been taken; of Marlowe's single, perfect little pastoral lyric, and of Dekker's songs, so choice and so few. Thomas Heywood possessed an almost equally clear runnel of song, in which we catch at times a sense for nature, premonitory of things afar off to come; while in Webster's two "Dirges," contributed, one to each of the two overpowering tragedies that have made his name immortal, we have an atmosphere of weird terror equalled only in the grotesque lyricism of the witches of *Macbeth.* Next to Shakespeare among his successors, John Fletcher could best turn a lyric; indeed, so much is his art in this respect like Shakespeare's later manner that it is not to be wondered that authorship has been made a matter of question in the beautiful "Bridal Song" in *The Two Noble Kinsmen.* Fletcher's range is only less than Shakespeare's, as his lyrics incidental to his plays are fewer in number. Fletcher hesitates not to take an old subject and find new pretty things to say on the endless theme "what is love?" or to conclude the series of a hackneyed tournament sonnet on "Care-Charmer Sleep" with a new treatment, nothing inferior. His "God Lyæus ever young" deserves a place beside Jonson's "Queen and huntress chaste and fair" or Shakespeare's "Plumpy Bacchus with pink eyne"; and it was doubtless to Fletcher's fine lines on melancholy, "Hence all you vain delights," with their perfect preservation of the single grey tone, that Milton, a careful student of the older poets, owed at least the design of his "Il Penseroso." Scarcely less happy than the lyrics of Fletcher are those of his coadjutor Beaumont, so far as the two can be separated. We have noted the tone of cynicism in Beaumont, which he may have had of Donne, as where he sings

> Never more will I protest
> To love a woman but in jest.

On the other hand, in finish, if not in a certain stiffness, and occasionally in weight of subject-matter, Beaumont is no unworthy son of Ben. Such especially is the quality of the lines "On the Tombs in Westminster Abbey," earliest of a series of poems on this topic and exemplifying a new note in the lyric, that of melancholy reminiscence suggested by a monument of past glory. Nor did the general lyrical facility fail even the later dramatists. Massinger, Ford, Randolph, and especially Shirley, all were writers of successful songs and quotable even in a select anthology of the lyrics of their time.

The masques, which flourished in increasingly expensive glory throughout the reigns of King James and Charles I, are full of lyrical poetry; and of this domain Ben Jonson is the recognized potentate, giving laws with dogmatic certainty informed, however, with consummate taste and a true love of poetry. Daniel, Campion, Beaumont, Chapman, Browne, all were competitors of Jonson in the masque, and all have left in this work of theirs admirable specimens of their lyrical art. Unhappily, the very perfection of the adaptability of poetry such as this to the purpose in hand often deprives it of that permanency to which its merits would otherwise entitle it. Still, it is not impossible to cull many a poem of indestructible beauty from among the forgotten glories of these sumptuous vanities of times gone by. Possibly the most permanent are the epithalamia or bridal songs, for the masque was often employed to grace the festivities of noble nuptials. Of applied lyrics of this kind (to go back for the nonce), none are nobler than the famous "Prothalamion" and "Epithalamion" of Spenser, the former written for the joint marriage of two noble ladies, daughters of the Earl of Worcester, the latter, the poet's own ecstatic marriage song. Neither of these formed part of a masque, nor did Chapman's "Epithalamion Teratos," the effective lyric which he employed for the celebration of a marriage in his completion of Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*. But it was poems such as these that offered Jonson and the writers of masques models for their subsequent work. There are few finer epithalamia than Jonson's which concludes the masque that Gifford picturesquely dubbed *The Hue and Cry after Cupid*, with its sonorous refrain, "Shine, Hesperus, shine forth, thou wishèd star." The foremost writer of masques in the time of King Charles was James Shirley, notable, too, as one of the great dramatists of his age. The lyrics of Shirley, which are often exquisite and deeper than surface thought and catching charm, are confined neither to his dramas nor his masques, but were collected by their author in a volume, published in 1646, in which he claims several fugitive poems already in print and attributed to other men. Despite the confusion of Shirley's lighter muse with that of Herrick and Carew, his is the larger utterance of earlier days; and so, to a certain extent, likewise, is Habington's, who in his sonnet sequence to Castara, 1634–1640, practised that now old-fashioned form almost for the last time, until it was revived, first by Charlotte Smith and Bowles in the latter decades of the eighteenth century, and later with renewed vigor and poetical success by Rossetti and Mrs. Browning in Victorian days.

Analogies frequently mislead and disprove what they are invoked to illustrate; and yet the often-repeated comparison of the reign of Elizabeth to the spring, the period of peculiar and rapid quickening, the time of bloom and promise, is as useful as it is obvious and hackneyed. In such an age poetry is careless in form and subject as we have seen, more intent on saying many things than cautious in selection; and the moral significance of art with questions of its mission are things little thought on, and, even if considered, carelessly neglected. There was vice and sin in these old days, and there were serious-minded men who deplored it; but, although the forces of disintegration were already at work, there was as yet no open break between the cult of beauty and the spirit of holiness. With the accession of King James a change came over the English world. First, the national spirit fell slack, with a foreigner come to the throne. As a consequence Puritanism, with its dangerous political aspirations, began to kindle, fanned by the fitful unwisdom of the king and his preoccupations pedantic and unkingly. The frivolous became more frivolous with their masques, revels, and costly entertainments, and royalty led the rout of folly; while the prudent, grave, and God-fearing felt themselves gradually alienated from much which they had hitherto been able to accept without question or cavil. The arts, and particularly the stage, suffered in this cleavage between the pursuits of pleasure and the dictates of morals. But to speak of Puritanism in its more inclusive sense, as wholly inimical to poetry, is totally to misrepresent the truth. The history of the sacred lyric alone, in the reign of James and Charles, with its splendid dedication to the worship and glory of God, whether the devotee were Anglican, Puritan, or Roman, is enough to disprove so gross a misrepresentation. This however must be confessed, the poets now chose between earthly and divine love or lived in later regret for their celebration of the former. Amor, Venus, and the rest were now felt verily to be gods of the heathen, to be sung with apologies if not with shame; and song, like other good gifts of the world, was enlisted in the services of virtue and godliness.

As a result of this split between the sacred and the secular world in poetry as elsewhere, the age of King Charles I produced the purest of our poetical worshippers of beauty as it produced the most saintly and rhapsodic of English devotional poets. Among the former Carew and Herrick stand preëminent, alike in their general characteristics and in the delicacy and perfection of their workmanship, but contrasted in many other things. Thomas Carew is described as an indolent student while at Oxford, a diplomat of modest success, later promoted to a close attendance on King Charles as the royal cupbearer. He wrote, like a gentleman, for his pleasure and that of his immediate friends, and his poetry came into print only after his death and after the passing of the immediate experiences that occasioned it. Carew was devoid of Jonson's scholarship as he was devoid of Jonson's show of it; but his learning was adequate and, if worn negligently, was always in the height of the contemporary mode. But neither the form nor the thought of

Carew's lyrics is ever negligent. Here he is strict as Jonson himself, and far more easy. Carew seldom trespasses on serious or important subjects, dwelling preferably in the world of compliment, polite love-making, pointed repartee, and sentiment only half serious. And yet Carew is a very genuine poet, full of fancy, unerring in his correctness of phrase, happy in his choice and management of stanza, and admirably in command of himself and his art. His taste for the most part preserved him from the conceit, whether of Sidney or of Donne. Carew, in a word, is the ideal poet of Waller's imagination, an ideal that Waller in his narrower, poetically desiccated, and less well-bred age, never approached.

Our other English poetical hedonist, Robert Herrick, is a very different type of man. Born in 1591, several years before Carew, Herrick probably began writing not long after the death of Shakespeare. He was one of the authentic sons of Ben and has left more than one poetical memorial of the brave old days at "the Dog, the Sun, the Triple Tun," where Jonson sat enthroned, the august potentate of literary Bohemia:

Where we such clusters had,
As made us nobly wild, not mad;
And yet each verse of thine
Out-did the meat, out-did the frolic wine.

Herrick somewhat unfittingly entered the Church and remained long years Vicar of Dean Prior in Devonshire, of which he was deprived during the Commonwealth, to be restored on the accession of King Charles. The publication of Herrick's poetry in a volume called the *Hesperides* was delayed until 1648, when his spirit of joy was peculiarly out of touch with the turbulent days of the trial and execution of King Charles. Herrick's volume seems to have fallen dead from the press despite a minor part of it on more serious subjects, designated *Noble Numbers;* and his reputation remained obscured to a time almost within the recollection of the scholarship of to-day. The lyrical poetry of Herrick — and save for his epigrams, which in comparison are negligible, he wrote no other — is of a range far contracted within the ample bounds of the Elizabethan muse at large. Ever remembering the minor number of his religious poems, many of them very beautiful, no English poet is so sensuous, so all but wholly erotic, and so frank and whole-souled a follower of hedonism in his philosophy of life, and of Anacreon, Sappho, and Catullus for his art of poetry. Herrick is a lover of all the joyful things of the world: the spring with its blossoms and country mirth, fair women, their youth, and the charming details of their beauty, its fragility and imperishable charm. He finds uncommon joy in common, often in trivial, things: the tie of a ribbon, the flutter of his mistress's dress, the small pleasures and superstitions of his country parish, his dog, his maid, the simple provender of his larder — better furnished, one may surmise, than the humility of some of his poems confesses; and he shudders at death as the negation of all that he adores, lamenting the approach of years with unfeigned regret for the joys that are past and irrecoverable. Yet Herrick's success lies less in all these things — which he shares with a dozen other poets — than in the vividness and simple directness with which he has realized them in an art as sure as it is delicate, as apparently unsophisticated as it is metrically and stylistically impeccable. Happiness of imagery rarely lapsing into actual conceit, sly humor, witchery of phrase, all are Herrick's. In a score of delightful poems — "Corinna Going a-Maying," "To Primroses," "Meadows," "Daffodils," "His Grange," and "Thanksgiving" — Herrick has equalled the best of the Elizabethan lyrists; and, in general, his technique is more perfect than theirs. As much cannot be said on this score either of William Cartwright, of whom Jonson said that he wrote "like a man," or Richard Lovelace, admirable gentleman that he was in the halls of Oxford, at court, and in the field. Both are lyrists of great inequality, Lovelace especially, varying between some two or three perfect little songs (such as the immortal "To Lucasta, going to the Wars," and "To Althea, from Prison"), sure of a place in any anthology including his time, and poems that fall into mere slovenliness and unintelligibility.

In the poetry of Herrick, and more particularly in that of Carew and Lovelace, to which we may add poems of Sir Robert Ayton, Cartwright, Brome, King, Hoskins and many more, we meet with the earliest considerable body of verse that comes under the category of *vers de société*. This variety of the lyric recognizes in the highly complex conditions of modern society fitting themes for poetry, and makes out of the conventions of social life a subject for art. Only the poet who knows this phase of life from within can truly depict it; not because it is superior to other life, but because it is broken up into a greater number of facets, each reflecting its own little picture. *Vers de société* makes demand not only on the poet's breeding and intimate acquaintance with the usages and varieties of conduct and carriage which distinguish his time, it demands also control, ease, elegance of manner, delicacy of touch, with an entire absence of pedantry, perfection of technique and finish. As to the result, exacting criticism has found its cavil and its sneer. *Vers de société* has been found wanting in seriousness as occupied purely with trifles; and in part this is true. Yet neither of poetry nor of life is it fair to demand that it be concerned wholly with

> Thrones, dominations, princedoms, virtues, powers.

The hyperbole of emotion would fare ill if judged by the standards of the hyperbole of compliment; and those who find nothing but shallowness and insincerity in the lyrics of Carew, are judging these delicately cut little cameos by standards better applicable to the portraiture of heroes hewn of granite or cast in bronze. "Breadth of design," "sustained effort," "artistic seriousness," all have their place in the jargon of the critic as measures to apply to the larger dimensions of heroic and romantic art; but such standards belong not to the distinguishing of the scents and colors of roses nor to the appraisement of the gossamer delicacy of many a lyric which is no less sincere because it happens to be founded on the superficialities of social intercourse that conceal very little after all the mainsprings of true human feeling.

Turning now to the devotional poets of the reign of King Charles, we reach a group as interesting for their diversity of faith and opinion as for the singleness with which they cultivated their dignified and supremely difficult art. We have heard of the devotional sonneteers, Breton, Constable, Barnes, and the rest; the translation of one or more of the psalms of David into verse appears to have been *de rigueur* to all who pretended to any cultivation of poetry, from Surrey and Gascoigne to Sternhold and Hopkins, and from Queen Elizabeth to Bacon and King James himself. Among the Elizabethans, Donne wrote some exquisitely fervent devotional poetry, Jonson like others a poem or two in the kind; but Southwell alone devoted his muse *in toto* to the praise and glory of God. As the Puritan spirit stiffened for its struggle with kingcraft, men of all faiths examined themselves more rigorously as to their beliefs, and the literature of faith, accompanied by that of controversy, gained in vogue and popularity day by day. These were the flourishing times of the religious pamphleteers, many of whom wrote in verse with pertinacious and exasperating facility. George Wither, friend and collaborator with William Browne in the *Shepherd's Pipe*, 1617, turned from the pastoral, from satire and lyrical verse (in the last of which he had approved himself in *Fidelia*, 1617, and in *Fair Virtue*, 1622, a genuine poet), to the religious pamphlet in verse. In *Hymns and Songs of the Church*, *Halleluiah*, and other like productions, he attested his facility in rime and the austere Puritanism of his faith. To Wither there was a greater mistress than art; but instead of enlisting art in the service of religion, he felt her ornaments were to be discarded as among the deceitful appearances that lure men from the straight and narrow way. Wither's devotional poetry is always didactic. Not dissimilar in general intent was the even more popular work of Francis Quarles, who, among many pamphlets which were little more than paraphrases of scriptural story, wrote several volumes — *Sion's Elegies*, *Sion's Sonnets*, for example — of devotional lyrics. The most famous of the books of Quarles is his *Emblems*, first printed in 1635, and followed almost up to our own time by innumerable editions. Quarles, unlike Wither, remained of the Church of England; and, equally unlike his Puritan rival, decked out his wit in all the grotesque originality of conceit. None the less Quarles is as genuinely devout as Wither, and these poets and their lesser kin brought "the consolation and stay" of poetry, mingled with that of religion, to thousands to whom the rhapsodic visions of Crashaw must have remained as a fourth dimension.

Of the many charming devotional poems of Herrick it is not necessary to speak at length. His is the attitude of the child, tired of play, who adores and fervidly, he knows not why. Herrick was doubtless a truly religious man and honored with unfeigned piety the picturesque forms of the Church which he served. Carew, with the well-bred gentleman's sense of the fitness of things, declares explicitly,

> I press not to the choir, nor dare I greet
> The holy place with my unhallowed feet.

Habington devotes the last book of his *Castara* to the heavenly Muse; and, save for a poem or two, the fine religious verse of George Sandys, the traveller, is paraphrase and not lyrical. There remain, if we except Milton, the three great religious poets of the age, Herbert, Crashaw, and Vaughan, and all were *par excellence* lyrists. George Herbert was born one of nature's darlings, his family, — that of the Pembrokes, — his favor, his talents, and his fortune all conspiring to that end. After a distinguished career at Cambridge, where he became, in 1619, Public Orator of the university, Herbert came into favor at court and enjoyed the friendship of Bacon and Dr. Donne. While Herbert was at college, Donne had been his mother's friend, and there can be little question that it was his example in the church and in poetry that determined Herbert's ultimate career. Having taken holy orders, Herbert became rector of Fuggelstone in 1630, dying prematurely three years later. His was a life pure, beautiful, and saintlike; and his poetry, humble though he reckoned it, was the flower of his piety and loving devotion to the animating spirit and the ceremonies of his beloved Church. His one volume, *The Temple*, was published posthumously and enjoyed an immediate and continued popularity. Herbert is a concettist, and delights not only in ingenious imagery but even in the puerilities of acrostics, anagrams, and shaped verses. But these ingenuities of his wit are the mere surface foam and bubbles of a tide of deep and irresistible religious fervor. The sincerity of Herbert's feeling, the sweetness of his faith, and the frequently high poetic quality that he reaches, make him one of the truest, as he is still one of the most widely read, of our devotional poets.

The poetical relations subsisting between Herbert and Crashaw are very close, for it was *The Temple* that begot alike the spirit and the title of Crashaw's volume of religious poetry, *Steps to the Temple*, first printed in 1646. Richard Crashaw was likewise of Cambridge, and was one of five fellows of Peterhouse deprived of their fellowships because they refused to take the oath of the Solemn League and Covenant, offered almost literally at the point of the sword. Crashaw soon after went abroad and, entering the priesthood of the Roman Church, died a sub-canon of the Basilica Church of Our Lady of Loretto. Before he left Peterhouse, Crashaw had written some charming secular verses, printed with his other work as *The Delights of the Muses;* but his enduring fame rests on his religious poetry. Crashaw, too, is a concettist and follower of Donne; but where Donne sees things oddly from the innate originality of his mind and Herbert dwells with loving ingenuity on every curious detail of his art, Crashaw is carried away in a storm of imagery, confused and incoherent at times from the very force of his eloquence. The figures of Crashaw are often not only extravagant but wanting in taste; yet it is easier to find in him passages of glowing religious emotion, sustained lyrical art, music of words, and splendor of diction, than it is to seek out his inequalities and lapses into the excesses of imaginative conceit wherein he has been time out of mind the example and warning of the critics. There is no English poet, until we come to Shelley and Swinburne, who is so dithyrambic as Crashaw, and few have matched the ease and music of his lines and the atmosphere of light and radiance that pervades the best of his poetry.

There is no such close connection between Vaughan and his predecessors as that between Herbert and Crashaw. Henry Vaughan, called the Silurist by his contemporaries because of his birth among the people of South Wales, entered Oxford in 1638, five years after the death of Herbert. Crashaw he could not have known personally, as Crashaw was of Cambridge and deprived of his fellowship while Vaughan was still an undergraduate at Oxford. But Vaughan had a glimpse of the former age. He knew Cartwright and Randolph and revered the memory of Jonson. These associations influenced him early to the writing of secular poetry, some of which, of a grade little above Randolph or Stanley, appeared as early as 1646. We do not know the particulars of Vaughan's life. Before long he turned his attention with his brother Thomas to religious prose and verse, his most important collection, *Silex Scintillans*, appearing in 1650 and 1655. We may imagine Vaughan in his beautiful home in South Wales, leading a life somewhat that of Wordsworth in his beloved Lake Country. Indeed, there seems much in common between the two poets, especially in their unbookishness, their love of nature in her power to reveal truth to man, their lofty poetical spirit, inequality of execution, and a certain narrowness, the price of the intensity of each. In Wordsworth this narrowness took the form of pride and didacticism; in Vaughan it was merely theological, and the product of his age. And yet Vaughan, even with this and his halting execution, is at times a great if unequal poet, and his close observation of nature and his loving sympathy with all living creatures presages an age far in advance in these respects of his own.

The accidental discovery of some forgotten manuscripts on a street book-stall in 1896, has placed a fourth poet, equally fervent in his piety if humbler in his attainments, beside the trio, Herbert, Crashaw, and Vaughan. Thomas Traherne was nearly of an age with Vaughan and, like him, was partly at least of Welsh blood. Preceding Vaughan by a year or two at Oxford, Traherne became private chaplain to Sir Orlando Bridgeman, and by that circumstance was identified as the author of a modest amount of devotional prose and verse of much sweetness and fervency. Traherne's poetry, while warmer tempered than that of Vaughan, seldom attains the glow of Herbert, far less the flame of Crashaw. Traherne has an easy facility of phrase and a command over his verse that is surer than that of Vaughan; and he maintains a uniform, if somewhat monotonous, excellence and music on his one happy string, the interdependence of God and man, that makes of man, not a *corpus vile* of corruption, but "a spring of joy crowned with glory." It is pleasant to discover among devotional poets strains so uniformly cheerful as Traherne's, and thus poetically to recover from Puritan despair, Anglican preciosity as to form, and the visionary ecstatics of Romanized Crashaw.

Among the minor lyrists of the latter days of Charles I may be mentioned Henry King, Bishop of Chichester, who amused himself with poetry during a long life, and negligently allowed his work to be much confused with that of other poets of his day. Thomas Stanley, too, noted for his *History of Philosophy*, was also a poet in his youth, now in the manner of Donne, now in a less difficult mode. Of Habington and his Castara, sole theme for his devoted muse, we have already heard, and of Lovelace, whose fortunes were as unequal as his poetry. Sir John Suckling, with all his coxcombry and carelessness, stands above any of these in his poetical gifts and, with his dramas as well as his lyrical poetry considered, holds a dignified place in the annals of literature. Suckling inherited wealth and a high social position and plunged, when a mere youth, into the gayest and wildest of lives, becoming no less famous for his verses and his wit than for his lavish extravagance, inveterate gaming, and dissolute life. As a writer of *vers de société*, delightful, daring, and cynical, perfectly well-bred, and at times of the highest artistic merit, Suckling, at his best, was unexcelled in his age. He died, a suicide, before the beginning of the civil war. Charles Cotton, a man of more equable spirit, was born in 1630 and lived on long after the Restoration, though his lyrics, most of them, belong to his earlier days. Several things are interesting about Cotton. He was the personal friend of Isaak Walton and wrote the well-known continuation of *The Complete Angler;* he was well-versed in French literature, and not only translated much from it but fell under the immediate influence of his contemporaries in French poetry. A genuine love of nature and ability to express in brief and vivid words that love, are characteristics of Cotton's poetry; and again and again he reaches excellence in his lyrics of love and good-fellowship. Not less appreciative of nature, though in her milder moods, is Andrew Marvell, Assistant Latin Secretary to Milton in Commonwealth times and redoubtable satirist of Charles II and his dissolute court. The poetry of Marvell belongs to his earlier days, when he was a tutor in the family of the parliamentary general, Lord Fairfax. Marvell revived the pastoral lyric with the unaffectedness and susceptibility to nature's charm that marked the poetry of Greene or Breton; and he imbued it with a much more serious thoughtfulness. But Marvell's love of nature is at closer hand, as shown in several lyrics, remarkably personal and circumstantial in detail, and in his few rare devotional poems. Suckling marks the crown of the conscious artistic lyric, poetry as the mirror of the sentiment and gallantry, the delicate compliment and raillery of the conversation of folk of the best society. Beginning in the conscious art of Jonson, this species of the lyric reached its culmination in Carew, to flourish in a desiccated branch in the poetry of over-praised Waller. But aside from Herrick and the greater devotional poets, the ultimate hope of the far future lay in the naturalness and unaffectedness of poets such as Cotton and Marvell, in whose sincere and beautiful minor poems are contained some of the choicest qualities of English lyrical art.

Allusion has just been made to the over-praised lyrical poetry of Waller, whose position in the history of English poetry has been traditionally misunderstood. Edmund Waller was born in 1605, three years before Milton and when Shakespeare had as yet eight years to live. He was the senior of every poet named in the last paragraph excepting Habington, and was writing poetry before the repute of Carew, Suckling, or Lovelace. There were three editions of Waller's poetry in the year 1645, before either Herrick or Carew had come into print, but the author's authentic publication of his work belongs to 1664. Waller was a man of wealth and position, a trimmer in politics, serving Cromwell or his enemies as opportunity offered. Waller was likewise a trimmer in poetry. An actual examination of his earlier poems, before they were sophisticated into accordance with the style that came to prevail by 1664, disproves the glib statement that Waller's "earliest verses . . . possess the formal character, the precise prosody without irregularity or overflow, which we find in the ordinary verse of Dryden, Pope, and Darwin."[1] Waller's poetry is resonant with the tones of other men — Carew and Herrick, in particular, both well known in manuscript and anthologies before the publication of their collected works; — and the resonance is always weaker than the original and always on the more popular note. Waller fell in happily with an age that was wearied with the ingenuities of conceit, and shrinking from the vigor of an exercise of the imagination to the safer and more comprehensible functions of the fancy. Waller would have been lost in the age of Elizabeth; as it was, he was found only when the tide of poetry had ebbed, save for Milton and Dryden, to the shallows wherein swarmed the Bromes, Roscommons, and Buckinghamshires. Among them Waller was a Triton.

Abraham Cowley was a greater poet and a far more estimable man. Only three years Waller's senior, Cowley was in print as a poet at fifteen. Ejected from Cambridge for his royalist leanings, after a brief stay at Oxford he entered the services of Queen Henrietta Maria, retiring with her to Paris, on the surrender of King Charles. There it was that he found his college intimate, Crashaw, in want, and sent him with a royal introduction to Rome. Cowley's life was cleanly, religious, and somewhat austere. He was neglected with many another good man by King Charles II at the Restoration, but repaid at his death by a royal *bon mot*. The range of Cowley's literary activity in poetry and prose is quite unusual among the lyrists of his time. With a name for himself in the drama, the familiar essay, and in serious and epical poetry, Cowley bulks large, and his collected works, in their many editions, assume the portentous. In his lyrical poetry Cowley is alike a follower of Jonson and of Donne, though the constructiveness of the former has less affected his methods and style than the latter's originality and conceit. Cowley was possessed of excellent poetical gifts, and he made by honest endeavor the best possible use of them. He was emulous of originality of thought and phrase, and we feel at times that he ingeniously strove for them. He essayed a multitude of themes and a variety of stanzas; his mood ranges from serious, religious, or moral thought, to lighter lyrics of love and humorous mock lyrics: and he is almost completely successful in each. One of Cowley's chief followings of Jonson consists in a number of lengthy poems on serious subjects which he entitled "Pindaric Odes." Jonson, who never spoke idly where the classics were concerned, wrote several poems which he called Odes, and one especially on the death of Sir Henry Morison that he entitled "A Pindaric Ode." In them he preserves to a nicety the formal conditions of the Greek model. Cowley, although a competent Latin scholar, as his Latin play *Naufragium Joculare* sufficiently attests, was not so happy with his "Pindarics," which, in their slovenly disregard of the rules of the form so flaunted in their titles, had much to do with the abuse of the term, ode, in later English poetry to signify almost any poem of a more or less serious intent, written in irregular metre.[1] Cowley's *Odes*, it may be fancied, have always been more admired than read; they are estimable productions, but not too often re-readable. Cowley died in 1667, too soon to acquire the gait and habit of the new restrictive poetry. His repute was greatest in the thirties and forties, before the conceit, which he practised with great ingenuity and success, had fallen into disrepute, and before the star of Waller had risen, harbinger to that greater luminary, Dryden. By the time that Pope had come to write, Cowley was hopelessly out of fashion; and the age that began a biographical notice of Waller with the words, "the most celebrated English poet that England ever produced," asked the cruel question: "Who, now, reads Cowley?"

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[1] E. Gosse, *Eighteenth Century Literature*, London, 1889, pp. 2, 4.

With the death of King Charles and the amazement and reaction that it bred, the writing and the reading of poetry flagged as men turned to the sterner political tasks of the moment. Milton at once threw himself with abandon into a struggle which seemed to him vital to the freedom of England, and Marvell soon left his seclusion to war with his pen by Milton's side. As for the Cavalier poets, those who were not dead or in exile were living, like the once magnificent Lovelace, in poverty if not in actual want; caroling boisterous songs in praise of loyalty and drink, like Cotton and Alexander Brome; or, at the least, abusing their Puritan enemies, like Clieveland, in satire, ribaldry, and jest. Stanley had turned from poetry to philosophy; Montrose, "one of the last of the goodly line of English noblemen whose highly tempered metal expressed itself unaffectedly in song," survived King Charles only a year. Save for Vaughan and a few belated collections of verse such as those of King, Stanley, Sherborne, and the posthumous volumes of Crashaw and Cartwright, the fifth decade of the century is peculiarly barren of poetry. But the transition into the new age was in process in poetry as elsewhere. Waller and Davenant were already adapting their thoughts with their metres to changing conditions and, closer to the return of the king, John Dryden began to write.

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[1] Cowley's age was not insensible to these defects; witness the strictures of Congreve in his excellent *Discourse on the Pindarique Ode*, 1705. For a short and rather slight summary of the English ode, see Mr. Gosse's *English Odes*, "Introduction," 1889.

In our contemplation of the lyrical poetry of the reigns of King James and Charles I, with its ingenuity, its tunefulness, its religious fervor, its cynicism, and its rich and varied form, we have left for the last the greatest of its names; for although Milton partook far more of the nature of his time than is commonly allowed, he stood aloof in his art, as in his faith, little touched by the idle temporary fashions in literature that dashed their momentary foam at his feet. Chronologically, there is no making Milton an Elizabethan, whatever the reminiscence or paternity of his poetry. He was almost precisely the contemporary of Waller, who, however, some years survived him. Herrick, nearly twenty years Milton's senior, died in the same year with him, 1674; Cowley, his junior by ten years, died before him, and for nearly fifteen years

Milton and Dryden were fellow subjects of Charles II. The poetical influences upon Milton, however, were those to which the Elizabethans had been subjected, working directly upon him as they had worked upon them, though with the slanting rays of an afternoon sun. We hear, for example, how deeply and lovingly Milton read the classics at Cambridge; how he acquired a familiarity with the Italian poets and wrote sonnets of his own in that beautiful tongue; how he knew and appreciated our English poets from Chaucer and Spenser to the Fletcher of *The Faithful Shepherdess* and the William Browne of *Britannia's Pastorals*. We hear, too, how above all Milton was influenced by the study of the Bible in his literary as well as his religious spirit, and this to a degree beyond that of any English poet that had gone before him. A notable thing about the inspiration of Milton is its bookishness. Few poets ever studied the classics so lovingly and so completely; few divines have been so sedulously read in the Bible; his was an extraordinary conjunction of profane with sacred learning. And yet, though read in the poets, the philosophers, the makers of great literature as few poets have ever been read, it must be confessed that Milton was less well read in the life about him, though an eager participant, when the time came, in the political affairs that were shaping the destiny of England. No man can escape the direct rays of the life about him unless he sequester himself in monasteries or live in the gloom of prisons. Yet it is easy for the scholar and lover of books to see life less by the direct, unbroken ray than as its light is refracted by the prismatic lenses of learning and former poetic art, often thus shivered into a new beauty indeed, but into a partial beauty after all.

The lyrical poetry of Milton, save for the later sonnets and the choruses of *Samson Agonistes*, belongs, as is well known, to the period before the civil war. Here, free as yet from the trumpet call to civic duty, he was able to give the earlier fruits of that reading and study in which he had fitted himself, like a religious novice, for the holy calling of poetry. These early poems of Milton comprise, among others, the marvellous "Ode on the Nativity," the exquisite companion lyrics "L' Allegro" and "Il Penseroso," the "mask," as he chose to call it, of "Comus," and the noble threnody on the death of a dear friend, "Lycidas." To have achieved poetry so varied in kind and so perfect in technical finish before the age of thirty was a marvel not to be repeated in English literature until the days of Shelley and Keats; and Milton himself did not rise, at least lyrically, above these triumphs of his young maturity. In the matter of immediate influences, we may discern how the "Ode on the Nativity" smacks of the "Marinism," fashionable in the poetic circles of the poet's day at Cambridge and exemplified in fantastic beauty and confusion in Crashaw's "Hymn" on the same great theme. We may note how here and elsewhere Spenser was Milton's guiding star, how Burton's "Anatomy of Melancholy" may have suggested the contrast of "L' Allegro" and "Il Penseroso," and a song of John Fletcher's the tone and technique of the latter.

"Comus," too, is but one in a long and brilliant succession of sumptuous court entertainments from Jonson to Carew, and "Lycidas" harks back, once more through many pastoralists, to Spenser, in whose Arcadian background linger the honored classical shades of Vergil, Theocritus, and Moschus. Yet there is ever about the poetry of Milton a supreme originality that arises out of a perfect artistic assimilation of the materials of his art, the imprint that marks the man of simple, great, and unaffected nature.

Milton is notably a serious poet. To him poetry was no "vain and amateurish" art, but ever to be cherished as a precious vocation, less sacred only than his allegiance to the state and his duty to God. Milton did more than any of our great poets, save Wordsworth, to reclaim poetry to a serene and steady contemplation of the weightier themes of life and to wean us from the notion that lyrical poetry especially is concerned only with the petty expression of trivial individual emotions. It has been remarked that love is not a theme of Milton's poetry; that, despite the contrasted titles of "L' Allegro" and "Il Penseroso," there is melancholy in his mirth, but no mirth in his melancholy; that "the topical bias," that is, an interest in affairs current and personal, is one of the inherent characteristics, if not a defect, of his poetry. All this is true; but what Milton lacked in diffuseness, in sympathy with individual men and the complexities of their lives and feelings, he more than made up in the intensity of his personality, the energy of his inspiration, and the refinement of his taste. In "Lycidas" for example, Milton was practising a funereal art long sanctioned in the lugubrious elegies of his English predecessors; but with the fantastic wealth of the Renaissance pastorals and the chaster examples of the classics before him, he raised this species of verse to a plane of artistic seriousness that made "Adonais," "Thyrsis," and "In Memoriam" possible. So, too, in his incomparable sonnets Milton's attitude is always dignified, his themes of moment, his execution finished, restrained yet ample. Those in Italian celebrate an obscure adventure in no wise discreditable to Milton's heart, if they be not rather mere poetical exercises in a beautiful foreign tongue. Except for these, with the sonnet on the nightingale and the cuckoo, neither does love, the all but universal theme of previous sonneteering, appear in the sonnets of Milton, nor do they group together in any unity or singleness of mood. Milton emancipated the English sonnet from the sequence, realizing its unity as of a higher order than that dependent on the accidents of collocation. Each of his sonnets is the effective presentation of a single mood, based upon some reality of person, character, or incident; and it was in the nature of things that, with this recognition of the essential unity of the thought, Milton should work in consciousness of those niceties of form that give to the Petrarchan sonnet its unmatchable position among the verse forms of lyrical poetry. Milton practised the sonnet in strict accord with the sequence of rime which Italian usage had established. He was not always so rigid in his adherence to the subtler Italian refinements as to pause. But who shall say that such a sonnet as that addressed to Cromwell or the poet's noble utterance "On his blindness" could be bettered by a transfer of the point of transition from sestet to octave to a place more regular according to exotic standards?

Indubitably in Milton the poet ever ruled the scholar, and we must look back to Æschylus and Sophocles for a poetic calm and elevation, a certainty of technique and a sustained nobility of thought such as his. However, the poet controlling the scholar alone will not explain Milton; for it must be confessed that in contrast with other poets of the first rank, Milton is not remarkable either for the fruitfulness or the variety of his reflections. It has often been observed with wonder that he should have made so much out of material well known and accepted. By way of example, Mark Pattison[1] once took the famous sonnet "Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughtered saints," known too well to need quotation here, and, showing first that a familiar quotation from Tertullian is its only thought, and acknowledging its "diction" to fall "almost below the ordinary," declared, none the less, that "it would not be easy to find a sonnet in any language of equal power to vibrate through all the fibres of feeling." And he finds the secret of this paradox in the circumstance that "the poetry of a poem [may be] lodged somewhere else than in its matter or its thoughts, or its imagery, or its words. Our heart is here taken," he continues, "by storm, but not by these things. The poet hath breathed on us and we have received his inspiration." The poetry of Milton, in ultimate analysis, resides in his transcendent personality, a personality in which simplicity, intensity, and confidence in himself and in his divine calling unite as they have never united before. His was a great and fervent soul, informing a nature so faithful that in his poetry the first condition is the perfection of artistry. Careless work, slovenly work, work neither fully thought out nor perfected, such as sullied the repute of other poets, was to Milton an impossibility, for poetry was to him a species of worship and worship was to him an art. Milton's is the only egotism that the world has accepted without cavil and without sneer. There is nothing ridiculous in the assumption of a Titan that he is a Titan. It was Milton's calm avowal that his poetic "gifts" were of "God's imparting, . . . which I boast not, but thankfully acknowledge, and fear also lest at my certain account they be reckoned to me many rather than few." His was the gift of the ten talents, and he rendered in the measure of their fullness. This is why "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso," "Lycidas," that splendid threnody devoted to the rites of friendship, and the lyrics of "Comus" in their precious setting, never stale of repetition; this is why they remain, with the sonnets, austere, personal, and occasional though most of them are, priceless as jewels and as permanent, to fail us never.

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[1] Introduction to *The Sonnets of John Milton*, 1892, pp. 58–60.

CHAPTER V

THE LYRICAL DECLINE; FROM THE RESTORATION TO THE DEATH OF COWPER

WITH the Restoration of King Charles II to the throne, indubitably a new spirit came to prevail in English poetry, and in no form was the change so complete as in the lyric. The new poets sang from the first in the newer strain; the older poets unlearned their art of singing or, failing so to do, were carried back into a swift oblivion. Such was the case with Cowley whose reputation was soon eclipsed by the greater fame of Dryden. Milton was inadequately appreciated in his own later time. Herrick, Carew, Suckling, Herbert — to say nothing of the earlier lyrists — all were speedily forgotten; and Waller, who had continued to keep his poetical (like his political) cock-boat afloat by its very lightness in the rapids of Commonwealth times, now floated out into the calm waters of the new age the acclaimed leader of the new poetry.

It is customary at this point in the history of English poetry to dilate on the extravagances of the pre-Restoration poets, to gibbet the conceits of Cowley and Crashaw and the occasional lapses into bad taste of Cartwright, Lovelace, and lesser men. Clearly, in view of such conditions, something had to be done; so the temperate Waller and the admirable Dryden here step forth consciously and generously to save English poetry from impending wreck on the jagged rocks of its own exorbitant imagination. As a matter of fact, no literature has ever been wrecked by the exuberance of the poetical imagination, although poverty of imagination has stranded many a petty craft on the sand-banks of time. Even the misdirected ingenuity of the conceit — which began with the first of the Petrarchists, not with Donne, much less with Crashaw — cannot be held accountable for the change in literary taste. Passing by the unfairness of a comparison of the lapses of the concettists and their failures with the controlled literary style of their successors in the next age, it may be affirmed that the contrast has been much exaggerated; and it might be easy to find passages in the poetry of the pre-Restoration poets exhibiting a control, a sequence of thought, and a moderation not inferior to the much praised "classicality" that came after. Nor is it difficult to find conceit, extravagance, and want of taste in the early work even of Dryden. Among the many affirmations as to this contrast none is more gratuitous than that which makes Dryden, or even Waller, a conscious leader in the change of poetical taste, or even, in a very large measure, responsible for it in its alleged foreign importation.[1] The qualities of style and the manner of thinking that came, in their fullness, to characterize the literature of the Augustan age, had their origins far back, and mainly in England; as to poetry at least, we shall find them especially (as already suggested) in the precept and example of Jonson. It can be shown beyond the peradventure of a doubt that Jonson exhibits in his non-dramatic poetry, so much of it occasional, a trend towards a precise, pointed, and antithetical diction, a Latinized vocabulary, and a preference for the decasyllabic couplet — stronghold of the Augustans — over all other kinds of verse. Dryden, like Jonson, was a playwright, a satirist, a poetical translator, and a critic of high order; and Davenant, who intervened, in some respects the most important literary figure between them, affected a similar catholicity. As to the lyric, it was in the nature of things that it should suffer in the new age. Already the imaginative power of the best of the Elizabethan lyrists had contracted largely to the play of fancy that characterized the concettists and writers of *vers de société*. Although Jonson wrote a poem telling us fancifully "Why I write not of love," it may be suspected that he felt a certain condescension with respect to the whole lyrical art as contrasted with his serious work in drama and satire, a condescension shared by Dryden and others that came after. Should this attitude among the lyrists of post-Restoration times be held in question, we have only to contrast the impassioned eloquence of Sidney's sonnets, or those even of Spenser, with the polite love-making of Waller in his effusions to his Saccharissa, to feel the difference. Therein this pattern of the new polite age disclosed to his admiring followers how a fine gentleman should court the lady of his poetical choice in verse as smooth and filed as his sentiments were becoming and unsullied by so vulgar a thing as passion. The coxcombry of some of these verses can be made credible only by quotation, though seriously to criticise it is, according to the proverb, to break a butterfly on the wheel.

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[1] See the present writer's "Ben Jonson and the Classical School," *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, XIII, 1898.

Thyrsis, a youth of the inspired train,
Fair Saccharissa loved, but loved in vain:
Like Phœbus sung the no less amorous boy;
Like Daphne she, as lovely, and as coy!
With numbers he the flying nymph pursues;
With numbers, such as Phœbus' self might use!

But alas! the cruel nymph would not for a moment stay, and after a chase

O'er craggy mountains, and thro' flowery meads,

the lover gives up the pursuit with these consolatory congratulations:

Yet, what he sung in his immortal strain,
Though unsuccessful, was not sung in vain:
All, but the nymph who should redress his wrong,
Attend his passion, and approve his song,
Like Phœbus thus, acquiring unsought praise,
He catched at love, and filled his arms with bays.

Sir William Davenant, god-son of Shakespeare, dramatist and author of the epic *Gondibert*, has less of the lyrical element in him than almost any poet of equal rank. A few songs, scattered through the plays, echoes at long range of the brave old age, an occasional poem or two, rising somewhat at times towards the higher air in which the lyric flourishes — these are absolutely all that there are to name of the strenuous first laureate of King Charles. Great poet, too, that Dryden was, towering tall and unashamed in his vigorous contrasted art even beside the austere bulk of Milton, his greatest limitations appear in his lyrical poetry. Three noble and serious "Odes" he did achieve, the two "for St. Cecilia's Day" and the splendid lines "to the pious Memory of Mistress Anne Killigrew, excellent in the two sister arts of poesy and painting." There are some half dozen lyrics in the plays adapted to other themes than those of love, a hunting song, a song of jealousy, a charm and so forth, besides some more or less perfunctory religious verse to which the term lyric may indulgently be applied. But, in general, by Dryden's time a lyric had come to signify simply a love-song, now languishing, now disdainful, now complacent, now satirical, but a love-song none the less; nay worse, if passionate, deteriorating into mere animalism; if sentimental, a bauble or lure in the frivolous game of gallantry that so occupied the Merry Monarch and his too loyal and imitative subjects. Thus one of the songs of Dryden's opera, *King Arthur*, 1691, begins promisingly: "Fairest isle, all isles excelling"; but this promise degenerates immediately into "swains and nymphs," "Venus" and "Cyprian groves," and England, we find "shall be renowned [merely] for love." Of another incidental love lyric of Dryden's from *Cleomenes*, 1692, Professor Saintsbury enthusiastically exclaims: "The song, 'No, no, poor suffering heart,' is in itself a triumphant refutation of those who deny passion and tenderness in poetry to Dryden; but for a few turns of phrase, the best name of the Jacobean age might have signed it."[1] Thus in the love lyric Dryden, the first poet of his age, even at his best, only approached, after all, the best names among the Jacobeans.

The miscellanies which we found so important in the earlier age, collecting as they did the best poetry of the time, continued in popular esteem throughout the seventeenth century. One of the most characteristic collections of the kind is *Wit's Recreations*, first published in 1641 and going through nearly a dozen editions before the close of the century. In its various forms this collected the published poems of Thomas May, Shirley, Herrick, Waller, Milton, Sir Edward Sherburne, and many other well-known poets, some of them before they had appeared elsewhere in print. Other miscellanies ranging between 1640 and 1671 are *Wit Restored*, *Wit's Interpreter*, *Wit and Drollery*, *The Loyal Garland*, and the popular *Musarum Deliciæ*. But in quality these and later collections by no means maintained the earlier standards, but turned from sentiment and genuine poetry to admit the verse of satire and wit, the humors of the street and the ribaldry of the tavern. The earlier fashion of the publication of song-books likewise continued almost to the end of the century, and in the hands of men such as Henry and William Lawes, Lanier, Playford, and the great Dr. Purcell, the music at least suffered no deterioration. Among these later poets who may have written exclusively for music, we know of none, however, approaching Campion. To return to the miscellany, towards the close of the century this title was applied to a somewhat different species of publication; for example, Cowley so entitled a section of his own poems in the edition of 1656. But far later Dryden so designated certain collections of poetry by himself and other authors, published apparently under his supervision. The first miscellany of Dryden, called *Miscellany Poems*, appeared in 1684; the second with the additional title *Sylvæ* in the next year. The last to which he himself contributed was the fourth, in 1694, now designated the *Annual Miscellany*. This irregular periodical was by no means confined to lyrical poetry, but contained satire and translation as well. Several poets of note made their début in its pages; among them was Pope, who contributed his pastorals to "the sixth part," 1709.

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[1] *John Dryden's Works*, ed. Scott and Saintsbury, Edinburgh, 1882, VIII, 212.

Returning to the lyrical poets at the Restoration, Shirley, the last of the great Elizabethan brotherhood in the drama, died of exposure, consequent, it is said, on the burning of his house in the great London fire of 1666. His octavo volume of poetry, 1646, was doubtless by this time as forgotten as his excellent plays. Cowley, who died in the next year, maintained from his personal repute a longer popularity; but his benign and ornate muse was out of fashion in these newer days of the return of the king, son to that queen whom Cowley had so faithfully served. As to other poets, the old-fashioned cavalier, Cotton, with his unaffected love of nature was nearly as *de* *trop* as the Puritan belligerent satirists, Wither and Marvell, and in none of these did song continue far into the new age. An interesting minor poet, who began to write with Dryden immediately preceding the Restoration, is Thomas Flatman, better known to his age as a painter of miniatures. Flatman is a disciple of Cowley, and he never succeeded in acquiring the mannerisms of the new age. He thinks for himself, and in some of his irregular odes — a form that he acquired from his master — has left behind him some creditable serious poetry. "The Matchless Orinda," whose folio volume appeared in 1667, three years after her death, belongs here too. Orinda was in plain life Mistress Katherine Philips, born Fowler, and a native of Cardigan. There she and her husband formed a little literary coterie, in which the members assumed fanciful names after a fashion prevalent in the romantic novels of the day. Philips was known as Antenor, Katherine, as Orinda; the admiration of friends added the flattering adjective "matchless." Orinda was not unknown to literary London, and Cowley, Orrery, and Flatman approved her. Her poetry, which is fluent rather than musical or thoughtful, is taken up largely with exaggerated praises of friendship, and her fame during her day was greater than her deserts.

And now the world was free to the new poets, the satellites of Dryden: Butler, Oldham, Roscommon, Orrery, Etheredge, the satirists, translators, dramatists, and occasional poets of the Restoration — who does not know their names and how "the glorious John" overtops their mediocrity and what is often less than mediocrity, where poetry (not mere wit, burlesque, and ribaldry) is the matter in question. Among these "holiday writers," as Pope afterwards called them, only Charles Sackville Earl of Dorset, John Wilmot Earl of Rochester, and, somewhat later, Sir Charles Sedley, can be described as lyrists of rank; and they, in a sense, carried onward to a restricted, though equally choice, development the *vers de société* of Carew and Waller. The lives and dissipations of these gentlemen of quality are singularly alike and signally representative of their gay and abandoned age. Dorset was the eldest, and he longest survived. He is described by Horace Walpole as "the finest gentleman in the voluptuous court of Charles II and in the gloomy one of King William." His lyrics are found only in collections and miscellanies. He disdained publication. Dorset's famous song, "To all you ladies now at land," bears the date 1665. Rochester, who died at thirty-two, a ruined debauchee, left behind him, besides the most exquisite lyrics of his school, printed verses, the ribaldry and brutality of which remain unexampled in any literature or age. As to Sedley, he was a more prudent, a less ungenerous, if not a less profligate man. Bishop Burnet thus distinguished Sedley from his fellows: "He was not so correct as Lord Dorset nor so sparkling as Lord Rochester." Sedley appears to have become somewhat less frivolous at the Revolution. He took sides against his masters, the Stuarts, whether from any political conviction or from a private grudge is a matter into which we need not here inquire. The lyrical poetry of this group, with John Sheffield Duke of Buckinghamshire, Sir George Etheredge, the dramatist, Mistress Aphara Behn, Lansdowne and some others, is purely that of amorous gallantry; its very mask and domino of names — Chloris, Celia, Dorinda, Phyllis, and the rest — proclaim it such; as does its vocabulary of hyperbole, its "charms" and "darts," its "passions" and its "flames." Even the honesty of its cynicism is to be mistrusted, and the whole imaginary world that it created is only a flimsy and would-be polite fabric reared on a basis of mere animalism. And yet the best lyrics of these poets abound in wit, happiness of phrase, delicacy of fancy, and charm of manner, rising occasionally to passionate lyrical eloquence:

Thou art my life — if thou but turn away,
My life's a thousand deaths. Thou art my way —
Without thee, love, I travel not but stray.

These are the words of Rochester, the most fervid stanza of a poem, "To his Mistress," that breathes passion from beginning to end. More in accord with the average excellence of this group of lyrists are these stanzas of Sedley:

'T is cruel to prolong a pain;
  And to defer a joy,
Believe me, gentle Celemene,
  Offends the winged boy.

An hundred thousand oaths your fears
  Perhaps would not remove;
And, if I gazed a thousand years,
  I could no deeper love.

Even its lesser members reach excellence. Aphara Behn, that interesting earliest example in our literature of a woman earning her living by writing, has left at least one song of enduring beauty, "Love in fantastic triumph sat"; other songs of hers are scarcely inferior. Considering what was to come after, lyrically, it is not too much to agree with Professor Saintsbury, that the poetry of this coterie of Dryden's contemporaries is "memorable as the last echoes of the marvellous song concert of the first half of the century. After the death of Dryden and of Sedley, in 1700 and 1701, a hundred years passed without anything like them."

There was more serious if less lyrically effective poetry in the age of Dryden; though most of it must be sought for deep in the works of forgotten poets or found, rescued, as some of it has been, in treasuries of minor poetry such as those of Dodsley or Churton Collins.[1] Thus Bishop Henry King, who survived the Restoration nine years, amused himself with poetry throughout a long life and wrote unequally, if always at ease, on subjects serious and trivial. Much abused Richard Flecknoe, too, victim with absolutely unlyrical Shadwell of Dryden's deadly satire, has been found lyrically quotable by the late Mr. Collins in two thoughtful little poems. In the forgotten *Odes* of John Oldham, chiefly remembered for his satires on the Jesuits, will be found a dignity of bearing not unworthy of his master, Cowley; and the difficult style of John Norris of Bemerton conceals at times, in the mysticism of its Platonic and religious ponderings, things of the essence of poetry. It is pleasant to think of excellent Sir Thomas Browne, writing verses as a "dormitive I take to bedward," the easy manner and placid wisdom of which will not so affect his readers. Lastly, for amends to Waller, whose long life closed in 1687, only a little more than a decade before that of Dryden, let us recall the noblest of his poems, the reputed last lines that he wrote:

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[1] Dodsley, *A Collection of Poetry in six volumes by several hands,* 1758; Collins, *A Treasury of Minor British Poetry,* 1896; *Caroline Poets,* ed. Saintsbury, 1910.

> The seas are quiet when the winds give o'er;
> So, calm are we when passions are no more.
> For then we know how vain it was to boast
> Of fleeting things, so certain to be lost.
> Clouds of affection from our younger eyes
> Conceal that emptiness which age descries.
>
> The soul's dark cottage, battered and decayed,
> Lets in new light through chinks that time hath made;
> Stronger by weakness, wiser men become,
> As they draw near to their eternal home.
> Leaving the old, both worlds at once they view,
> That stand upon the threshold of the new.

In the years of transition from the rule of Dryden to the rule of Pope, two poets of genuine lyrical quality appeared. These were Prior and Congreve. William Congreve in a way continued the lyric of gallantry, as understood and written by Rochester and Sedley, but with a more controlled and epigrammatic grace. Congreve is best remembered for his brilliant comedies of manners, so brilliant indeed and ablaze with wit that they misrepresent, in this respect at least, the life which they were intended to portray. Wit is likewise the inspiring quality of the small number of short lyrical or epigrammatic pieces that Congreve has left us. This wit is daring, even *méchante* at times, but every stroke tells, and every stroke is within the rules of the game; for "the splendid Congreve," the Beau Brummel of his day, is ever polished to the nail. Matthew Prior, though he too wrote lyrics in the approved manner of the same school, broadened the scope of *vers de société* in subject-matter and by the infusion into it of a species of *bonhomie*, sentiment, and humor conspicuously at variance with the prevalent aridity of the age of wit and reason. Prior was a good scholar and an accomplished man of the world. He had risen, in the diplomatic service, to the post of ambassador to France, and appears to have been deeply involved in the intrigues that sought to restore the Stuarts to the English throne on the death of Queen Anne. His poems, published in 1709, include much quasi-satirical and occasional verse which need not concern us; for Prior is not memorable for his dull Pindaric welcome to William of Orange or for his modernization (and spoiling in the process) of the admirable old ballad of "The Nut Brown Maid." Prior's title to fame rests on less portentous matters. It may be a parody on Boileau's pompous and complacent "Ode on the taking of Namour," it may be in lines of mock gallantry and the tenderest of sentiment to a "child of quality," or in verses whimsically conceived for his own monument, — in all we have the easy humanity, keen insight under a frivolity of manner, kindliness of spirit and quickness of apprehension that belong to the man of the world, expressed with a simplicity and gay charm of manner that is inimitable and unapproached. His version of Hadrian's famous lines "To his Soul" has more than its dainty wit to recommend it; it marks the height at times attainable in this charming species of the lyrical art, one in which only Praed, Landor, Dobson, and a few others were to equal their master, Prior.

Poor little, pretty, fluttering thing,
  Must we no longer live together?
And dost thou prune thy trembling wing,
  To take thy flight thou know'st not whither?

Thy humorous vein, thy pleasing folly
  Lie all neglected, all forgot:
And pensive, wavering, melancholy,
  Thou dread'st and hop'st thou know'st not what.

It is noteworthy in Prior that he preferred for his lighter pieces measures which departed as widely as possible from the tyranny of the rimed couplet. He dared to use the anapestic trimeter with an ease and skill not equalled by Dryden, whom he followed in this respect; and, even in the conventional lyric of love, "Cloe and Euphelia," "Cloe, how blubbered is that pretty face," or "The Question to Lizette," contrived to do the old thing in a charming new way.

And now we reach the famous age of Queen Anne, the ascendancy of Pope and the confirmed rule of the heroic couplet, the metrical enemy of lyricism. It is amazing how small a figure Pope cuts when the question concerns the lyric. The spirit of song was as foreign to him as the grotto at Twickenham, with its "decorations of sparkling shells and minerals," was foreign to nature. And yet to judge Pope for the absence of a quality, the negation of which made him in some respects the man and the author that he was, would be as unfair as the satisfied pronouncement of the romanticists which denies to Pope any place within the domains of Parnassus. In the fair house of poetry are many mansions and, however remote from the soul of lyricism may be the artificiality, the rhetoric, the specific application, and the antithetical balance of this great artificer in wit, Pope has his place even among poets, if not among lyrists, for his delicate fancy, for his occasional insight, and for his power of crystallizing thought in admirable metrical form. In deference to all this, the anthologies of lyrical poetry reprint Pope's epigram "On a certain Lady at Court," his "Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady," and the least unlyrical of all his poetry, "The Dying Christian to his Soul," Hadrian's "*Animula vagula, blandula*" once more, already better done by Prior:

Vital spark of heav'nly flame!
Quit, O quit this mortal frame.
Trembling, hoping, ling'ring, flying,
O the pain and bliss of dying!

Surely only the sanction of a great name and other less questionable achievement could justify the inclusion of these mediocre rhetorical lines in any category lyrical.

Somewhat better are the much quoted verses, "Happy the man whose wish and care." But the patent masquerading of the last stanza, "Thus let me live unseen, unknown," from the lips of the vainest of English poets and the most effectively self-advertised, forever deprives "The Contented Man" of any place among genuine lyrics. Admirable master of extended occasional verse that Pope was, he was not successful in *vers de société;* he was too satirical and splenetic, too little master of himself or in control of the venom of his tongue. Mr. Locker-Lampson in his famous collection, *Lyra Elegantiarum*, quotes some lines of Pope "To Mrs. Martha Blount [the woman that he loved] sent on her Birth-Day," and others "To Thomas Southerne" on a similar occasion. The first reads like a formal toast, tempered with obvious religious sentiment; the latter is not much more than foolery. The most hopeless thing in all this eighteenth-century propriety of mien and precision is its complacence, its unconsciousness of anything beyond or above. Even its humor it took *au sérieux*, obsessed with the belief that with the death of the then King George, wit, poetry, criticism, and the arts must perish off the earth.

With such examples of the lyrical art, what could lesser men do? It may be affirmed with confidence that there is not a lyrical note discoverable among the Popeans as a school that does not as materially lessen the rank of its singer as a follower of Pope as it materially raises him in our estimation as a true poet. Those who took Pope as their only guide in poetry and metrics rose no higher than to places in Tonson, Dodsley, and other similar collections, unless, like Addison and Swift, to them poetry was merely a diversion. Addison's well-known hymn, "The spacious firmament on high," deserves a dignified respect; as to Swift, while the curt verdict of his kinsman, Dryden, "Cousin Swift, you will never be a poet," is not to be contradicted, there is, none the less, a playful fancy and a real tenderness in many of the verses included in *The Journal to Stella* (where, be it remembered, the real Swift disclosed himself) unpublished and undivulged until time had laid away both of these unhappy lovers in the grave.

> Stella, say, what evil tongue
> Reports you are no longer young;
> That Time sits with his scythe to mow
> Where erst sat Cupid with his bow;
> That half your locks are turned to grey?
> I'll ne'er believe a word they say.
> 'T is true, but let it not be known,
> My eyes are somewhat dimmish grown;
> For Nature, always in the right,
> To your decay adapts my sight;
> And wrinkles undistinguish'd pass,
> For I'm ashamed to use a glass;
> And till I see them with these eyes,
> Whoever says you have them, lies.

Among those who wore their Pope with a difference was Henry Carey, who lives for one piece, a ballad-like lyric in happy lover's prattle, "Sally in our Alley," a poem altogether natural and charming. Here, too, belongs amiable John Gay, who could do anything cleverly, if he was only set to do it and was not overtaken by his incurable indolence in the process. It was Gay that was set upon Ambrose Philips by Pope because Philips had the impertinence to write pastorals at a time when Pope was engaged in the same occupation. The result was *The Shepherd's Week*, a parody of the degenerate pastoralists of the day, characterized by much freshness of spirit. The mock-heroics of *Trivia, the Art of Walking the Streets of London*, the pleasing *Fables* and the prodigiously successful *Beggars' Opera*, all are illustrations of the same trait. The songs of the last and of *Polly*, Gay's other "opera," are trivial; but other lyrics of Gay — among them "'T was when the seas were roaring," "O ruddier than a cherry" from *Acis and Galatea* (which Handel set to music), the "Song to Phillida," and "Black-eyed Susan," — live in anthologies of our English song for their musical quality and their easy verse. And yet, as compared with the genuine lyric of earlier and later times, could anything be more preposterous and untrue to nature than this last much lauded song? This impossible young woman, "black-eyed Susan," comes aboard a ship, exclaiming in the manner of modern "musical comedy,"

> O! where shall I my true love find?
> Tell me, ye jovial sailors, tell me true,
> If my sweet William sails among the crew?

Whereupon William, who is "high upon the yard" which is "rocked with the billows to and fro" notwithstanding that the ship is still at anchor in the Downs, "sighed and cast his eyes below," following immediately himself. In the dialogue that follows, William gallantly asks permission to "kiss off that falling tear," compares Susan's eyes to diamonds and her skin to ivory. This production, which Palgrave at some nodding moment included in his *Golden Treasury of English Songs and Lyrics*, concludes:

> The boatsman gave the dreadful word,
> The sails their swelling bosoms spread,
> No longer must she stay aboard;
> They kissed, she sighed, he hung his head.
> Her lessening boat unwilling rows to land;
> Adieu! she cried, and waved her lily hand.

Here the lyric expires in rhetoric, improbable narrative, and perverted realism.

Thomas Parnell, an older man than Pope, was born in Dublin in 1679, and only swung late into the latter's powerful orbit. Some of Parnell's *Songs* (such, for instance, as the one beginning "When thy Beauty appears") preserve a freedom of metrical cadence and phrasing quite unusual in his time. His "Night Piece on Death" has been praised for its "nature-painting," and his "Hymn to Contentment," for its freedom in the employment of trochaic substitutions in an iambic measure, similar to the same so effectively used by Milton. Even more marked than Parnell's departures from current poetical conventions were those of Edward Young, also an older man than Pope and actually a predecessor of Pope's in that special form of satire which Pope made his own. But there is little that is lyrical in Young's famous *Night Thoughts*, with its strain of elegiac and rhetorical moralizing in admirable blank verse, and its air of theatrical gloom, which however effectively tragic in its age, begets in ours a wholesome and alleviating spirit of levity. It was Wordsworth that excepted "The Nocturnal Reverie" of Anne Finch, Countess of Winchilsea, from his universal denunciation of English poetry from *Paradise Lost* to Thomson's *Seasons* as not containing "a single new image of external nature." This famous deliverance is an exaggeration, to be sure, but an exaggeration founded on the recognition of a general truth. Lady Winchilsea, who died in 1720, some sixty years of age, began under the prevailing poetic influence of her youth, that of Cowley; but her taste and the circumstances of her life turned her to nature rather than to books for her imagery; and, while the lyrical spirit is in no wise peculiarly hers, the freshness and naturalness of her ideas and illustrations is veritably an element noticeable in the reaction soon to set in towards a more salutary conception of poetry.

Critics have been prone to take the flourishing of the sonnet as a criterion of the presence in our English literary history of the qualities that mark the soul of poetry. Certain it is that the sonnet burst into a blossoming springtime with Shakespeare, sensibly declined, as in summer, under Elizabeth's successors, and, prolonging its late bloom into a glorious autumn with Milton, came to the silence of winter from Commonwealth times to nearly a century later. Mr. Gosse once noted that William Walsh, who died in 1708, "is the author of the only sonnet written in English between Milton's, in 1658, and Warton's, in 1750." [1] And this is substantially true if we except two sonnets of Benjamin Stillingfleet (1635–1699), culled for one of the sonnet anthologies and probably written much about the time of that of Walsh.[2] With Gray and Thomas Warton the sonnet revived. It was suitable to the meditative spirit of Cowper, and it is a matter of wonder that he did not employ it more frequently. With *Elegiac Sonnets,* 1784, by Charlotte Smith, and *Fourteen Sonnets,* five years later, by William Lisle Bowles, the custom of sonnets written in sequence also revived. Both of these sonneteers deserve the modest place that they still hold in anthologies, and it is not an accident that Bowles should have been the champion of "natural poetry" and the assailant of Pope in later years with Campbell and Byron as his opponents. The two or three sonnets of Burns that may be added to the slender number written in the eighteenth century, possess the discreet and tempered graces that mark the sober English Burns as contrasted with the Scottish lyrist drunk with the madness of his native song.[3] It may be remarked that Burns, though he caught the idea of the included rime, failed to note or at least to observe the stricter rules of the sonnet. As the sonnets of Bowles are in precisely the same form, it may be assumed that Burns was practising what to him was a new and polite English art, not essaying the revival of an instrument of poetic expression hallowed by the usages of the past.

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[1] *Ward's English Poets,* III, p. 7.

[2] S. Waddington, *English Sonnets by Poets of the Past,* 1888, pp. 52, 53.

[3] See "On Hearing a Thrush Sing," 1793, and "On the Death of Robert Riddle," 1794.

To go back to the more general reaction that set the current of English poetry slowly in motion on its returning flood, we must turn to James Thomson, the true coryphæus of the movement with his *Seasons*, written in blank verse, and his *Castle of Indolence* in Spenserian stanza. The Scottish birth of Thomson and his coming up to London only after his poetical tastes had been formed, removed him measurably from the weight and authority of the urban school of Pope. With that almost infallible power of observation which was his, an innate love of the country and of our older poetry, especially Spenser's, it is not to be wondered that Thomson, whose poetry was enormously popular in his day, set up a kind of *imperium in imperio* and exercised a wholesome influence on public taste in this attitude of protest against the urban school. And yet as we read Thomson to-day, with a becoming salute to "Rule, Britannia!" how fully he seems to us to share the virtuous attitudinizing, the moral platitudes, and the artificial rhetorical devices which were the accepted poetical canons of his age. Among the poets that group immediately with Thomson, Dyer with his *Grongar Hill* is contained well within the superficies of *The Seasons*, as Blair with his funereal *Grave*, is comprised within the ampler limits of Young's *Night Thoughts*. Shenstone imitates the Spenserian manner in his *Schoolmistress* as Thomson really did a little after him. Indeed Shenstone compasses some poetry which, however sentimental and artificial, occasionally approaches the lyrical. He is not unmusical or wholly repetitious in thought. As to the rest lyrically, including Thomson, the least said is the soonest mended. The spirit of song and the poetic subjective sincerity was no more in them than in the verse of Pope, Swift, or Addison, although the want seems less a drying up of the poetic life-springs than their diffusion and dilution into something of another kind.

With Collins and Gray, whose work was printed, almost all of it, within the decade of 1740 to 1750, the lyrical spirit revives, for both have left poetry which claims for itself a place above that which we accord to those who merely illustrate their time. Collins's life was short and it ended in insanity; but his reputation as a poet was made long before that malign catastrophe and rests almost wholly on his *Odes*, most of them addressed to abstractions such as Peace, Fear, Pity, Mercy, and the like. If Thomson took Spenser for his model and inspiration, Collins chose Milton, the Milton of "L'Allegro" and "Comus." Nor does he fall far short of his example in the limpid clarity of his diction, the chaste restraint of his figures, his fondness for abstractions personified and for the music of classical proper names. The "Dirge for Cymbeline," "The Ode to Simplicity," "The Ode to Evening" and several more belong in the category of great English poetry; for, even with inequality and a certain preciosity somewhat difficult to endure for those who have gone through romanticism and beyond, Collins would have been a notable poet in any age, perhaps a hundred years earlier, a very great one. And what is said here of Collins is measurably true of Gray, whose restraint, fastidiousness, and impatience of anything but perfection have left him the author of few, but of very choice poems in the kind of thing that he set out to do. The universality of poems such as the famous "Elegy written in a Country Churchyard," which has usurped to itself the designation of a whole class of poems, the equally wide appeal of the "Ode on the Prospect of Eton," these are things to be reckoned with even if, like Charles Lamb, with respect to the soliloquy "To be or not to be," we have long since lost any power to discern, unaided by their repute, whether they contain poetry good, bad, or indifferent. It was Matthew Arnold's idea that Gray was larger than his work, that he was one who might have done poetically almost anything, but that "he never spoke out."[1] Could a man so scholarly, so academic, a man who so paused at sentiment, as he paltered at the picturesque in nature, ever have reached the passion that is within or the passion for things without? Nothing could be more admirable than the poetry of Gray — witness the great Pindaric odes, "The Bard" and "The Progress of Poesy" — sentiment, style, versification, all is sincere, brilliant at times, and absolutely finished. Some of the phrases we cannot help getting by heart: "Youth on the prow and Pleasure at the helm," "The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power," "Contemplation's sober eye," "the rosy bosomed Hours," and many more: we have always heard them quoted and always heard them praised. Yet we are unsatisfied and a little impatient and, like the discontented Athenian citizen, would like to cast a black ballot for this impeccable Aristides, if we dared. As to the lesser men, Gray's contemporaries, Byrom, Savage, Armstrong, Mason, Falconer, the laureate Whitehead, the Wartons, and Churchill, where in their dreary wastes as spread by Dodsley, do we find one lyric flower not of paper and tinsel? In the *Odes* of Akenside (best in his "Hymn to the Naiads"), there is an approach to lyrical expression at times not far short of Collins when not quite at his best; in "The Minstrel" of Beattie, there is a modest yearning after "the Gothic," as the mild approaches to romanticism in the latter eighteenth century were called. The hymns of Watts, and more especially those of John and Charles Wesley, deserve the respect that honest devotional effort (even when versified) should properly inspire; and in view of what followed, the interest in old poetry, especially balladry, which now revived in the publications of Allan Ramsay, in Percy and his *Reliques*, 1765, with Thomas Warton's excellent *History of English Poetry*, 1774, came to react before long on the lyric as well as on other poetry. And yet verily our sympathy can not but go out to Dr. Johnson who frankly abided, in the verses he wrote, by the *Musa pedestris* of Pope, and to Goldsmith who did nearly the same, but for a certain elegiac and moralizing deviation, exemplified in the "Deserted Village," which he caught of Thomson and justified by doing better in his own way.

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[1] *Essays in Criticism,* Second Series, ed. 1900, p. 69.

When the romanticist reverts to the eighteenth century — or what is more likely animadverts upon it — he can discover only two poets, Christopher Smart and Thomas Chatterton; the rest, save of course for Blake, are anathema. Smart, otherwise no more than a literary hack who latterly went mad, is memorable for one lyric of genuine fervor, the "Song of David." There are no verses so nearly dithyrambic from Crashaw to Shelley, account for them how we may, with the critics, as the genius of madness, or with Mr. Symons, as the madness of genius. Here are two stanzas from this remarkable poem:

Strong is the lion — like a coal
His eyeball, — like a bastion's mole
  His chest against the foes:
Strong the gier-eagle on his sail;
Strong against tide th' enormous whale
  Emerges as he goes.

But stronger still, in earth and air,
And in the sea, the man of prayer,
  And far beneath the tide:
And in the seat to faith assign'd,
Where ask is have, where seek is find,
  Where knock is open wide.

Surely these are strange outbursts for the sage and proper times of Gray, Collins, and Dr. Johnson. Scarcely less alien is Chatterton, that "marvellous boy," who took his own life at eighteen, unknowing that his portion was to be fame for his own achievement and a position most important as affecting the future. There was a brief controversy, it will be remembered, about the time of the poet's death, 1770, as to the authenticity of the poetry of a fifteenth-century poet named "Thomas Rowley" whom Chatterton pretended that he had discovered in the muniment room of St. Mary Redcliffe, Bristol. But the sources of Chatterton's Middle English, the processes of its manufacture, as of his inspiration, have long since been discovered, and everything is now explained except how the unlettered boy came by his rare anticipatory romantic genius. Chatterton's success is strangely dependent on his own archaized and invented vocabulary, and Professor Skeat, however valuable his scholarly labors, has not improved the poet in Chatterton by his philological restorations.[1] Chatterton's may have been, to a large degree after all, the precocious promise of youth which is not always fulfilled. And yet how charming lyrically is Ælla's "Dirge," for example, and with what simple material is it all accomplished. With Chatterton music returns to the English lyric, and with music that quality of atmosphere, as it has been called, in which the romantic appeal so largely subsists. Whether a mature Chatterton could have withstood the correctness of Gray and the example of Cowper it is idle to inquire.

In the estimate of such a poet as William Cowper, it is well to remember that he was born in 1731, while Pope had yet several years to live, and that Cowper's own poetical activity, confined almost to the decade of the eighties, stretched only a few years beyond the confident rule of that most confident of literary potentates, Dr.

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[1] Skeat, ed. of Chatterton, 1891.

Johnson. In Cowper, therefore, there was much of the old: the Popean ideals of correctness and to some extent even the Popean versification, the precision and premeditated elegance of the diction of Gray, and a Thomsonian objective touch with nature — not much more. Cowper's retired and uneventful life, enforced by his congenital foe, melancholia, kept his poetry tethered to familiar subjects; but while he descends at times to trivialities, the strength and genuineness of his feeling, anticipating the Wordsworthian doctrine, often dignifies his matter so as to lift it into the sphere of poetry. In "My Mary," in the lines "On the receipt of my Mother's Picture," though elegiac rather than lyrical, in the fine sonnet to Mary Unwin, and elsewhere, Cowper makes clear his claim to his place among the great English poets; and this claim rests, above all other things, it would appear, on a sincere human sentiment, as universal as it is true and delicate, wedded to an unaffected poetical style that again and again reaches the simplicity of greatness. With this in mind, we may accept "The Task" and even the "Olney Hymns," though we need not read them; and we may accept, too, the pleasantries of the critics with the designation of Cowper as "a Pope in worsted stockings uncommonly thick," remembering, too, that "he stood at the cross-roads with his face towards the heights of Wordsworth."

With George Crabbe and his peculiar and very effective "criticism of life," whatever his place in the footway leading to romanticism, we have nothing to do; Crabbe's tongue was not that of the lyrist. With William Blake, however, we are not only on the very threshold of the "bright pavilions" and the "charmed magic casements" of the romanticists, but we have to reckon with one whose earlier medium of expression is possibly more purely and undividedly lyrical than that of any other English poet. The first thing to remember about Blake is the chronology that takes him back into the alien past. Born in 1757, two years before Burns, Blake had printed his volume of *Poetical Sketches* in 1783, a year before the death of Dr. Johnson. More than this, the poet informs us that these poems were written between his twelfth and his twentieth year, that is between 1768 and 1777, and hence, some of them, while Gray and Goldsmith were yet active and before the poems of Chatterton had been printed. The *Songs of Innocence* appeared in 1789, the *Songs of Experience* in 1794, three years before *Lyrical Ballads.* Thenceforward Blake departed from the lyric and chose the direct symbolism of his Prophetic Books as his mode of poetical expression. We may therefore say that the lyrical, that is the cogent and coherent Blake, whatever his later affinities, belongs wholly in point of time to the eighteenth century. It has been said that Blake would have been "a liberty boy" in the days of the Pharaohs, and he would assuredly have sought expression in the kindred arts, painting, poetry, and music, no matter what that negligible part of his existence, his human surroundings. And yet even Blake was not without those literary influences that start, if they do not determine, the course and growth of genius. Mr. Symons notes the influence upon him of *Ossian* which appeared in 1765. The Ossianic manner is more noticeable in Blake's later work than in the lyrics. And the critic notes, too, the touch of Blake with Chatterton and Elizabethan song. "My silks and fine array" is pure Elizabethan and an exquisite song that neither Jonson nor Fletcher at his best need have disdained. But these things, with some slighter more immediate points of contact with conventional features of prevalent poetic style, are the least part of Blake, who was as little affected by his surroundings poetical as he was by the opinions and the manners of the people he knew. Mr. Symons in a notable passage tells how Blake differs in his lyricism practically from all other poets. How he sings not of love, but of forgiveness, not of beauty except to unmask her "soft deceit and idleness," not of the brotherhood of men, but of the cruelty, the jealousy, the terror that, alas, are human. "Ecstasy in nature" is not Blake's, and he regarded even Wordsworth as "a kind of atheist, who mistook the changing signs of vegetable nature for the unchanging realities of the imagination." In short, "the poetry of Blake is a poetry of the mind, abstract in substance, concrete in form, its passion is the passion of the imagination, its emotion is the emotion of thought, its beauty is the beauty of the idea."[1]

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[1] A. Symons, *The Romantic Movement in English Poetry*, 1909, pp. 42, 43, *et passim*. See also the same author's excellent *Study of Blake*, 1907, and *William Blake*, by B. de Selincourt, London, 1909.

Farewell, green fields and happy grove
  Where flocks have took delight:
Where lambs have nibbled, silent move
  The feet of angels bright.

. . . .

They look in every thoughtless nest
  Where birds are covered warm;
They visit caves of every beast
  To keep them from all harm.

Nothing could be more impersonal. There is in all this, as in Blake's utter disregard of human figures in his poetry, a certain likeness to the abstractedness of Donne from the forms of the world and from all their physical manifestations. But the likeness ends in the material. We feel of Donne that he has passed by reading and contact with men through the world, and finding it vanity, has turned his face away to the larger verities of the mind. Donne's wisdom is the wisdom of speculation and experience; Blake's the innocence of childhood, and much of his charm is dependent on this worldlessness, if we may so term it. Indeed, Blake is quite impervious to contamination by actualities or facts; to him the idea is more truly the reality than to any other English writer, and it is not wonderful that he should have so wandered from that concreteness and condensity (in which lyrical success so largely subsists), into the broken music and the flashes of vision of his later mystical, incoherent, and yet remarkable Prophetic Books.

This aloofness from other men and the poetry of other men, these flights into beatific vision and rhapsodic oracular expression, are precisely the qualities most remote from the genius of Robert Burns, greatest contemporary of Blake, most absolute and sovereign lyrist of the entire eighteenth century. For the richest gift of Burns, next to his incomparable gift of song, is his humanity, the finely attuned sympathy that put him into intimate touch not only with nature but with every genuine human emotion. Though born a cotter's son and educated almost literally at the tail of a plough, Robert Burns was no ordinary peasant; indeed, it may be doubted if the word peasantry ever rightly described the Scottish tiller of the soil, at least since the days of the Reformation: and the Burnses intellectually were above their class. In Scotland, unlike England, there has existed for centuries a traditional poetry, at times crystallized in the written word, more frequently a flotsam on the tide of popular memory, tossed hither and thither, and his who can make it artistically his own. Not to go so far back as James Watson's *Choice Collection of Scottish Poems*, 1706–1711, the *Tottel's Miscellany*, as it has been called, of Scotland, it was this tradition that was maintained, for example, by Allan Ramsay and his literary circle, into whose *Tea-Table Miscellany*, 1724, went songs of the Hamiltons of Gilbertfield and of Bangour, of Crawford of Drumsoy, Mallet and Lady Grizel Baillie, as his earlier collection of *Scots Songs*, 1719, preserved with somewhat less literary sophistication earlier minstrelsy of a similar kind. A later group of lyrists, more northern and scattered geographically, included George Halket, a Jacobite schoolmaster, Alexander Ross, described as "a stickit minister . . . contented and tuneful on twenty pounds a year," Alexander Geddes of Morayshire, a Roman Catholic priest, and John Skinner, a persecuted Episcopal minister of Aberdeenshire. Burns especially admired the verve and spirit of the songs of Skinner and owed much to him on his own confession. As in the old Elizabethan time, this gift of song was no respecter of persons, and here in Scotland it was shared by laird and ploughman, by men and women alike. Jean Adams, who wrote "There's nae luck about the house," ended an unhappy life in an almshouse; Isobel or Tibbie Pagan, author of "Ca' the yowes to the knowes," was a cottager of Ayrshire, described as deformed, dissolute, and as formidable for her tongue as attractive for her powers of song. On the other hand, Lady Anne Lindsay, daughter of the Earl of Balcarres, was reputed the author of "Auld Robin Gray"; and the names of Harry Erskine, later Earl of Rosslyn, for his patriotic "The Garb of Old Gaul," and of Sir John Clerk, a Baron of the Exchequer, like those of many another laird and gentleman, figure among those who contributed either songs of their own or old songs refashioned to the Scottish lyrical stream of the day. Among many other names may be mentioned that of Dr. Austin, fashionable physician of Edinburgh, Alexander Wilson, ornithologist, the aeronaut, "Balloon Tytler," original editor of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, the schoolmasters, Blacklock and Hewitt, Skirving, a farmer of wealth, Lowe, like Burns a gardener's son, Mayne, a compositor, and John Logan, the eloquent minister of Leith. It was in such a literature of song, preceding and surrounding him, that Burns was reared and grew insensibly from a partaker in its treasures into a mastery of it as his own inherited possession. Burns, acting naturally and daringly on the accepted processes of former Scottish poetry, took his own wherever he found it with a confidence and a justification unparalleled save in the not altogether dissimilar case of Shakespeare's own lyrics. This is particularly true of the relations of Burns to Robert Fergusson, the precocious and unhappy young Edinburgh poet who died in a mad-house in 1774, when only twenty-four years of age. Burns erected a monument to the memory of Fergusson, and never ceased to admire him and to acknowledge his poetical indebtedness to him. Burns thus becomes in Scotland the crown of a long series of influences and the artistic form-giver of many an old song which his genius in transformation has made his own. For this reason the poet is constantly less successful when literary influences rather than those of tradition move him, or those dependent on his exquisite sensibilities or his own admirable powers of observation.

To return to the life of the poet, it has been in fashion not so long since to expatiate on Burns the country roué and carousing exciseman; and a fellow poet, alas, has made it his business to make the most of these delinquencies.[1] Were the discussion of these matters needful, much might be said on the character of the age of Burns somewhat to mitigate the inevitable harshness of any verdict against him, and more were we willing to ply our own contemporary vagary that seeks to justify the destruction sometimes wrought in the path of genius by the theory of "the overman." But why should we pass on aberrations of conduct which Burns shared with hundreds of his weak fellow-mortals who were not possessed of a tithe of his genius? The experiences of Burns with the lasses of Ayrshire indubitably heightened the glow of passion in many a fine lyric; and it was the good cheer that he loved that cost the poet his life. As a matter of fact, neither the conduct of Burns (which was often far from admirable), nor his politics, nor his other opinions need in any serious wise concern us. It is the poet, — here, of the many sides of that poet, his compelling power over words and phrases, his minute and vivid sense of reality in detail, his mastery of the weapons of scorn and indignation, — it is specifically the lyrist that interests us and holds our admiring attention. And as a lyrist Burns is supreme. Poignancy and sincerity of passion, music swift and infinitely varied, the rule of a sure artistic taste, and that unerring certainty of touch in which we recognize how inferior is the thought of the wisest man, if he be not a poet, to the instant flash of the poet's intuition — all these things in their perfection are qualities of the lyrical poetry of Burns. And he was as happy in the possession of them all as he was fortunate in having, by virtue of his birth, a medium for the expression of his poetry, unhackneyed by the daily barter of literary usage, and a mastery over verse and stanza that constantly wrought new wonders out of material trite and old. Burns reached a clarity and simplicity of diction in the lyric unmatched by any one before his time save Shakespeare; and he also attained to that choicest gift of the greatest poets, the power to give to elemental and universal ideas a form of crystalline and lasting beauty.

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[1] See Henley, *Burns, Life, Genius, Achievement*, 1898.

From our point of view of the lyric, none of the lesser poets of the last of the century need hold us, whatever his individual claim on the high seas of general poetry. The inspiration of Burns begot a lesser inspiration in several lesser poets: Joanna Baillie, with her *Fugitive Verses*, 1790, more memorable for her few songs than for her portentous *Plays of the Passions;* and Lady Nairne, although her poetry, with that of Hogg and Tannahill, comes rather later, with the influences of the romantic outburst likewise upon them. Erasmus Darwin, with his *Botanic Garden*, last and most preposterously logical of the followers of Pope; William Hayley, puzzled friend and benefactor of Blake, as wretched a poet as he appears to have been an estimable man; Samuel Rogers, who aimed in his *Pleasures of Memory*, as in his later pleasing versified guide book, *Italy*, no higher than prose and reached no higher: in none of these is there the slightest suspicion of the lyric. And still less could we expect to find song in the *Rolliads*, the *Baviads*, and *Mæviads*, in which, as in the earlier *Diaboliads*, contemporary small satirists in forgotten diatribes chid lesser men than themselves. Hannah More, "the most powerful versificatrix in the language" as Dr. Johnson called her, yields little that is lyrical; and the verses of Mrs. Mary Robinson, the Prince of Wales's "Perdita," who styled herself "the English Sappho," yield, of their kind, too much. Another poetess, Anna Lætitia Barbauld, in a long life of literary diligence, reached deserved repute for a single beautiful poem, beginning, "Life! we've been long together"; though that, too, came later. With Blake, Chatterton, and Burns in mind, and likewise with the respectable unlyrical people noticed above, it might almost be said that the lyric by 1795 had fallen into the hands of women and children, ploughmen and mad folk. But the day was at hand, and the lyric was shortly to come to its own. In this very year, 1795, Walter Savage Landor issued the first of his volumes of poetry; in the next, Coleridge appeared for the first time as an author in company with Charles Lamb; while 1798 is the ever memorable year of the publication by Wordsworth and Coleridge of *Lyrical Ballads*. But all of this belongs to the next chapter.

CHAPTER VI

THE LYRIC AND THE ROMANTIC REVIVAL

THERE are words that are like palm-worn coins; we believe them to be precious metal, but we know neither their sometime weight nor to what sovereigns they once owed allegiance: they have become mere counters. Such a word is "romanticism," with some half dozen like, — classical, psychological, renaissance movement, — and they deserve no less than banishment from our lips and from our books, could we know how to get on without them. As to romanticism, which is our concern, to attempt a new definition here would be mere pedantry; to assume that the term is likely to mean sufficiently nearly the same thing to any two minds to make exact a joint conclusion, would be an assumption hazardous at the least. And yet obviously there is a difference between the trim and definite urban world of Pope, between nature as excellently described by Thomson, or man set nakedly forth by Crabbe and the transfigured world of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, and Shelley; and somewhere within the broad and undefined superficies that marks the difference, the element in literature, as in art, called romanticism, finds its place. A well-known critic has called this change "the renaissance of wonder," and indubitably wonder at the strange, the inexplicable, a sense of the unattainable beyond our philosophical, as beyond our artistic reach, is a striking component in the make-up of our early nineteenth-century romantic poetry.[1] But this is not all; the greatest poets do not leave us in puzzled and dissatisfied perplexity, nor can the art that aims at it knows not what, reached it knows not how, charm much beyond the period of its novelty. Dubiety, approximation, and incompleteness are no more qualities to be sought in art than in science; the suggestiveness, the sense of something seen from a new angle, the depth, beyond, so to speak, which is of the very essence of romantic art, may be compassed in many other ways than by stirring the sense of the marvellous. When all has been said, perhaps the artists' word "atmosphere," long ago used by Coleridge, most nearly expresses this quality of depth, the real criterion of romantic art; certainly no poem, piece of fiction, or picture that is without the something that we designate "atmosphere," can be considered romantic. And we have come to set such store on this matter of shadow and light that we are wont, some of us hastily, to deny poetry, art, grace, existence, to anything else.

The influences that make for a change in taste seldom come singly or as the result of some one revolutionary figure. If the nineties of the eighteenth century marked the culmination of Pope in Erasmus Darwin, the popularity of Cowper continued in Rogers's pedestrian *Pleasures of Memory*, with the *Sonnets* of Bowles "written amidst various interesting scenes, during a tour under youthful dejection," as one of their accepted novelties. They saw, too, not only much of the poetry of Blake and Burns, but three little volumes in which Wordsworth figured, — *Lyrical Ballads* among them, — Coleridge's *Poems on Various Subjects*, and first volumes of Southey, Lamb, Landor, and Ebenezer Eliot. In almost all there is departure from the things poetical that had been, and much of their newness is of a nature lyrical. In that famous walk of Coleridge and the Wordsworths in the Quantocks, the summer of 1796, when *Lyrical Ballads* was discussed and with it the principles of the new poetry, Coleridge reported his agreement with his friend on "the two cardinal points of poetry — the power of exciting the sympathy of the reader by a faithful adherence to the truth of nature, and the power of gaining the interest of novelty by the modifying colors of the imagination." It was these two "powers" that the two authors exercised, each in his contribution to their joint early effort — for to *Lyrical Ballads*, "We are Seven" and "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" both were contributed. It will be recalled by all readers of poetry how Wordsworth, after a brief experience with the world in London and in momentary touch with the French Revolution, retired to his native Lake Country to cultivate poetry with a devotion and a constancy absolutely unparalleled; and how in contrast,

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[1] Mr. Theodore Watts-Dunton in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Of course, this allusion by no means disposes of this admirable phrase or calls into any question the fine critical discernment discoverable in this justly famous essay.

Coleridge tried preaching, journalism, lecturing, and German metaphysics abroad, only to lose his exquisite gift of poetry in the thirsty sands of theological and philosophical speculation, in which, however, his intuitive grasp of truth, the weight of his thought and its suggestiveness, leave him, despite many projects deferred and unfinished, the master critic of his time.

Wordsworth wrote poetry for more than fifty years; yet almost all his enduring work was comprised in the decade that opened with the publication of *Lyrical Ballads* and closed with *Poems in Two Volumes*, 1807. This statement is particularly true of the lyrical poetry with which we are alone concerned. For with all his description, narrative, and moralizing, the new thing that Wordsworth brought to English poetry, the memorable thing, was his power to take emotions, actually roused and stimulated by simple scenes and incidents, and, passing them through a calm and meditative artistic process, transmute them into that higher and more significant product that we call poetry. This process is *par excellence* lyrical. The lyrical poetry of Wordsworth is of many kinds and expressed in a variety of our simple English metres, handled always with masterly directness and self-control. Some of it is personal in the older sense in which the master passion of love has always been the inspiration of the poet; far more was suggested to him by scenes, either within his own experience among his beloved lakes and hills, or by incidents of his various tours abroad or in the British Isles. Some of the many, many sonnets —

reduced by rigorous exclusion by Matthew Arnold to sixty memorable ones — are historical or called up by contemporary political events. The best of these, as perhaps of the lyrics in other forms, are those that touch nature in her power to reach, through the interpretation of poetry, the significance of minor and commonly unconsidered things; and like the rest of the author's poetry, all have passed through the medium of the poet's personal experience and cogitation. It has been said that Wordsworth drew little from the acquisitions of other men; that he started life with no such stock in trade of generally accepted ideas as most of us possess, for the most part unconscious that we possess them. To such a mind everything that it observes comes in the light of an actual discovery; hence the poet's descent, at times, into mere trivialities, — we may believe that none of them were such to him, — and his strange inability to distinguish the excellent among his own poems from the moralizing mediocrity that characterizes so much of the Wordsworthian low countries.

The ruminating subjectivity of Wordsworth is by no means easy to understand. Like most men who live much to themselves and think deeply, Wordsworth was peculiarly self-centred and in a certain sense narrow. But when he sought expression for his personality in his art, he found it, not like Byron, in laying bare what we may call the physical autobiography of his soul to an astonished world, or in a Keatsian absorption in the worship of beauty as a cult, but in the elevation of his own musings from the plain of observation and meditation to the sphere of poetry, in which the thing once merely personal to the poet comes to have a new and universal significance. *The Prelude,* which is Wordsworth's spiritual autobiography of soul, and many of the lyrics, illustrate this quality: "The Solitary Reaper," "The Highland Girl," even the poems "to Lucy." Take, for example, the often quoted

> I wandered lonely as a cloud
> That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
> When all at once I saw a crowd,
> A host, of golden daffodils;
> Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
> Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.
>
> . . . .
>
> The waves beside them danced; but they
> Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
> A poet could not but be gay,
> In such a jocund company:
> I gazed — and gazed — but little thought
> What wealth the show to me had brought:
>
> For oft, when on my couch I lie
> In vacant or in pensive mood,
> They flash upon that inward eye
> Which is the bliss of solitude;
> And then my heart with pleasure fills,
> And dances with the daffodils.

Here as in so many of his poems it is not the subject, but its transformation on the anvil of poetic thought that gives it its beauty and permanence. Wordsworth extended the lyric to a wider range of personal-impersonal feelings, shall we call them, than it had known before, unfolding to us the joy there is in the unregarded things, when once seen in the "light that never was, on sea or land." Indeed, to Wordsworth poetry was not alone "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling"; to the making of it went, likewise, according to his own theory, subsequent "recollection in tranquillity." It may be said that it is this leisurely pondering and shaping of poetic material in a mind never hurried, never perturbed, never weary with its own processes, if not always uniformly successful in the result, that distinguishes Wordsworth among English poets. It is in poems such as the sonnet "On Westminster Bridge," and the scarcely less beautiful "Evening on Calais Beach," in "The world is too much with us," the immortal "Ode on Intimations of Immortality," the "Ode to Duty," and a score of lovely lyrics, "The Green Linnet," "To a Cuckoo," and some more, that Wordsworth is at his best. In the rare union that he reached in such poems of "deep feeling with profound thought," and with a style, at its best, restrained almost to a Greek purity, this greatest of the romantic poets attained to heights beyond which, with all the imitation that he inspired, our English lyrical poetry has not yet soared.

If Wordsworth moves us poetically with "thoughts too deep for tears," the contrasted appeal of Coleridge is addressed more directly to the senses; and his is that inexplicable charm that comes with the power of magic. It has been said that "Kubla Khan" is an infallible touchstone of lyrical appreciation as it is likewise of lyrical quality, by comparison, in other poems. Indubitably the lyrical taste of him who can not recognize the warmth of color, the pomp and music of sound, the weird intensity of feeling, involved in this remarkable fragment of a fantastic dream poetized, may well be deaf to lyrical quality in other modes; but to dignify "Kubla Khan" to any such position would be much the same as to make some one of the exquisite, cobweb incoherences of Debussy musically the touchstone of lyrical spirit in Beethoven, Chopin, or Schumann. The touch of magic which is Coleridge's, notably of course in "Christabel," is assuredly an exquisite gift and the beginning of a new note which deeply affected the poetry of the century. Seldom has a poet so successfully essayed new melodies by reaffirming, however unconsciously (as Coleridge did in "Christabel"), the metrical freedom which has ever been the birthright of English verse. Quite as rarely, too, has incompleteness lent a charm, unequalled even by the sustained artistic logic by means of which Coleridge's other masterpiece in the supernatural, "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," reaches its unqualified success. But magic in Coleridge is not merely dependent on the supernatural. Take these exquisite lines from "Youth and Age":

O Youth! for years so many and sweet,
'T is known that thou and I were one;
I'll think it but a fond conceit —
It cannot be that thou art gone!
Thy vesper-bell hath not yet toll'd —
And thou wert aye a masker bold!

> What strange disguise hast now put on,
> To make believe that thou art gone?
> I see these locks in silvery slips,
> This drooping gait, this alter'd size:
> But springtide blossoms on thy lips,
> And tears take sunshine from thine eyes!
> Life is but thought: so think I will
> That Youth and I are housemates still.

What other English poet employs such witchery of phrase on so every-day, so universal a topic? And yet very little of Coleridge's poetry is really personal; everywhere we find him exercising the function of the philosopher in generalizing emotion until it becomes typical and therefore artistic. In one of the profound pieces of critical insight which characterize that fascinating autobiography, the *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge declares that one of the first criteria of genius is the power to exercise the poetic art on subject-matter remote from the personal experiences of the poet; for only thus can the passion delineated be truly disinterested and so reach the typical.[1] This Coleridge again and again succeeds in doing, creating for us as a result a veritable atmosphere of light and color in the medium of which his ideas became in the highest sense of the word romantic.

From these heights of the romanticism of the spirit and from Wordsworthian revelation we must now descend to the picturesqueness and admirable selectiveness that mark the poetical narratives of Sir Walter Scott; and possibly the best way to make this descent is by way of

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[1] Chapter xv, *Works of Coleridge*, American ed. 1884, III, 376.

James Hogg, Scott's fellow-countryman, the "Ettrick Shepherd." Hogg was born in 1770, the same year with Wordsworth; though Wordsworth survived Hogg, who died in 1835, no less than fifteen years. Hogg was no more than a herd-boy, but he acquired at his mother's knee much of that rich folk-lore of the Scottish peasantry which we have already found at once the inspiration and the quarry of Burns. Hogg was twenty years old before he had mastered what Carlyle calls "the mystery of alphabetic letters"; but at twenty-six he had begun to write verses, and his earliest songs were printed in 1800. Hogg has been described as a poet, "wholly destitute of passion," but he could write a stirring battle song such as "Lock the door, Lariston," and there is lilt and music in some of his songs ("When the kye comes hame" or "My love is but a lassie yet") that would not discredit Burns himself. In "Kilmeny," the quality of which is lyric despite its narrative form, Hogg attained, unmistakably for once, romantic magic. There is an unearthly glamour about the stolen maiden, allowed to revisit her earthly home by her captors in the land of faery, that thrills almost as Coleridge can thrill us. And among the innumerable lyrics that the skylark has inspired in English poets, few are so charming as Hogg's, beginning:

Bird of the wilderness,
Blythesome and cumberless,
Sweet be thy matin o'er moorland and lea!
Emblem of happiness,
Blest is thy dwelling-place —
O to abide in the desert with thee!

It used to be the fashion to praise Sir Walter Scott for the versatility with which he turned from success in poetry to success in prose, from the writing of romantic narrative in verse to the writing of romantic narrative in prose. There was obviously no versatility here; for, despite all the charm and motion of the longer poems of Scott, they remain largely pure narrative and lift more rarely into the higher regions of poetry than any verse of their merit in the language. From the possession in it almost alone among the songs of Scott of the much vaunted touch of magic by which the romanticists set such store, the song from *The Heart of Midlothian* beginning "Proud Maisie is in the wood" has been called Scott's only lyric. But there are other poems that deserve the title: the pretty lullaby "Now, bless thee, my baby," patriotic lyrics such as "King Charles" and "Bonnie Dundee," and the lively hunting song with its charming refrain, "Waken, lords and ladies gay," assuredly among them. Scott was so splendid a piece of manhood, with honesty, courtesy, and chivalry so written in large upon his life, that it irks one to find anything wanting in his ample nature. Yet he was possessed precisely of those qualities that are most frequently mistaken in their glitter, facility, and success for poetry. Scott has hardly any insight into nature beyond those features and situations that are obviously picturesque, and no storms of passion or depths of inward pondering express themselves lyrically in all his voluminous writings. It would be a mistake to attribute this, however, to insensibility or to the lack of a strong and finely tempered personality. Great literary man that he was, Scott was simply not lyrically vocal; and we feel, as we read his occasional lyrical successes, that they are after all exceptional.

Scott touched life at first hand, even if tradition, the archæologist and the collector of curios in him, did interfere at times to destroy the contact. Robert Southey, who was surer in his own heart, with his *Thalabas* and his *Kehamas*, of poetical immortality than possibly any other English poet laureate, seems to have reached mankind and the world only through the intervention of books; and accordingly he has left just one poem quotable even approximately as a lyric, the "Stanzas written in his Library." The estimable virtues of Southey, of which his friends and the critics have made so much, no more concern us than his unreadable epics. Precisely the contrary is true of Charles Lamb; for Lamb in his habitual expression of self, so natural and so charming, is always more than half a lyrist, although he has left in bulk little that is clothed in the customary raiment of poetry. Lamb's earliest poetry, entitled *Blank Verse* and written with Charles Lloyd, belongs in publication to the year 1798. Proportionate to its amount, the poetry of Lamb furnishes much to the anthologies, all of it original and of worth. Like Southey, Lamb, too, lived in books, but with how different a result. Lamb's contribution to the romanticism of his time was his discovery of the Elizabethans and the joyous and discerning acclamation that he gave them. He is more than half a poet of an elder age himself. A favorite lyrical metre of Lamb's, for example, is the octosyllabic, managed much after the manner of Wither. Lamb employs it in his exquisite "metaphysical" bit of moralizing "On an infant dying as soon as born," and again, linked in threes, as Carew was wont to use it, in the beautiful lines "In my own Album." Lamb, too, could raise personal emotion to the height of lyrical impersonality, and we know not whether "When Maidens such as Hester die," written of one to whom the poet had never even spoken, reminds us more, in its circumstances, of Donne and his unseen, unknown Mistress Drury, or of Wordsworth and his "Highland Girl." There is a choiceness of flavor in a love poem such as this, rarefied like the ether above the heats and clouds of earthly passion, and as perfect in expression, too, as in mood. Only once has Lamb surpassed this lyric, and that is in "The Old Familiar Faces," daring metrical experiment though it is, and one that the poet did not repeat. If a poem is to be judged by its success and not by preconceptions, "The Old Familiar Faces" must be accepted without extenuation or excuse. No flow of orthodoxly regulated syllables could produce the complete effect of these broken words, ordered in the slow movement of despairing revery.

> I have had playmates, I have had companions,
> In my days of childhood, in my joyful school-days —
> All, all are gone, the old familiar faces.
>
> I have been laughing, I have been carousing,
> Drinking late, sitting late, with my bosom cronies —
> All, all are gone, the old familiar faces.

. . . .

How some they have died, and some they have left me,
And some are taken from me; all are departed —
All, all are gone, the old familiar faces.

Such a *tour de force* is never to be classed with the metrical nihilism of a Whitman; but as a daring Turneresque triumph by means of the employment of an untried medium in a case not to be won by the assent of orthodoxy.

Walter Savage Landor, though five years the junior of Wordsworth, published poetry almost as early and formed for himself ideals in literature as independent. Moreover Landor's was a style more purely his own than that of any poet of his time. His achievements in letters were manifold: prose, drama, the epic, the lyric, and, above all, the epigram. In all, too, he attained excellence, though popularity has never waited on him. Landor's literary pose throughout his long life was that of aloofness, he literally "strove with none," and he succeeded in keeping himself singularly free from the Gothic romanticism that permeated Scott and the rest of the narrative poets and from the naturalism of the Wordsworthians as well. The classical training of Landor was extraordinary and his facility in Latin verse such that he frequently wrote his poems in both languages, preferably translating into English from the Latin in which he had first clothed his thoughts. Indeed, in his restrained and studied beauty of thought, Landor was more artistically conscious, whether in verse or in prose, than any other English author of rank easily to be named; and in consequence there is an epigrammatic flavor rather than a lyrical about the greater number of his shorter poems. Even his deservedly most popular lyric, "Rose Aylmer," possesses this characteristic. In a word, Landor is less completely a lyrist than one of the most consummate writers of *vers de société* in the language. Many of his poems in this kind are of extreme brevity, four lines, at most eight or ten, but finished to the last syllable. Such is the famous epitaph, "I strove with none for none was worth my strife," the hardly less perfect, "Ah! do not drive off grief," or this:

> How many voices gaily sing,
> "O happy morn, O happy spring
> Of life!" Meanwhile there comes o'er me
> A softer voice from memory,
> And says, "If loves and hopes have flown
> With years, think too what griefs are gone!"

Surely none will deny that such poetry has in it more than the quality of mere epigram; the unity, the single tone, the grace of perfect execution, the deeper feeling beneath — all these are qualities of the lyric. A longer specimen of this union of lyrical and epigrammatic art is the following:

> In Clementina's artless mien
>   Lucilla asks me what I see,
> And are the roses of sixteen
>   Enough for me?
>
> Lucilla asks if that be all,
>   Have I not cull'd as sweet before:
> Ah yes, Lucilla! and their fall
>   I still deplore.

I now behold another scene,
  Where pleasure beams with Heaven's own light,
More pure, more constant, more serene,
    And not less bright.

Faith, on whose breast the Loves repose,
  Whose chain of flowers no force can sever,
And Modesty who, when she goes,
    Is gone forever.

Is it over-subtle to observe that the last stanza performs the double function of completing the description of the maiden and informing the poet's enquirer why such as she are not preferred to "the roses of sixteen"? Landor wrote greater things than his lyrics; but some of us gladly recur to them for their finish, their taste and reserve, and for that fine salt of wit that may yet preserve them beyond the term of our contemporary predilection for "nature," "atmosphere," and the other indefinable things that we spend so much of our critical time in defining.

Almost within the decade in which the copyright of *Lyrical Ballads* was appraised, on the settlement of the publisher's business, as of no assignable value, and not long before De Quincey could boast, with an approximation to the truth, that he was the only reader of Landor's *Gebir*, Thomas Campbell reached popularity at twenty-one with his *Pleasures of Hope*, 1799, which has been happily described as the last gasp of the poetry of the eighteenth century. By 1809, when his *Gertrude of Wyoming* was published with equal success, he had conformed his style to the romantic narrative that Scott had brought into vogue. Campbell was a versatile man, possessed of little originality, but clever in seizing upon picturesque and pleasing commonplaces and treating them with a certain readiness and with a sentiment not ungraceful. As to his lyrics, several of them — "Ye Mariners of England," "The Battle of the Baltic," above all, "Hohenlinden" — caught and retained the popular ear; and the last, for its genuine fire and spirit, deserves its reputation. The sentimentality of Campbell is more difficult for us to accept than his somewhat cheap, if eloquent, patriotism; the former was more acceptable to the age that wept over Mrs. Radcliffe's novels and required the satire of Gifford to recover it from the inanities of Della Crusca. Below the level of memorable poetry the age abounded in tuneful song, that caught the taste of the moment and appeared in song-book and album. Charles Dibdin, who died at almost seventy in 1814, left behind him six hundred songs of the sea and on other subjects, all of them easy, singable, most of them robust, many of them vulgar. There is, too, a certain "go" in the now forgotten lyrics of Thomas Dermody, some of them written as far back at least as 1790, and the later ones collected posthumously into the *Harp of Erin*, 1807.

In the lyrics of Thomas Moore, so famous in his day, we meet with the very beau ideal of immediate and happy contemporary success. Moore gained his reputation with *Odes from Anacreon*, 1800, which is both less and more than a translation, and in his revival, at least in respectable form, of the old song-books, *Irish Melodies with Music*, 1807, and nine other editions up to 1834. Moore has been perfectly described by Mr. Symons as "the Irishman as the Englishman imagines him to be," "he represents a part of the Irish temperament; but not the part which makes for poetry." [1] Indeed, no two things could be wider at variance than a genuine lyrical inspiration, such, for example, as that of Burns, with the traditions of three centuries of national song behind him, and the drawing-room prettiness and sentimentality of the words that Moore — polite, vivacious gentleman of the tinsel society of the regency — devised to fit his *Irish Melodies.* Moore wrote wholly to please, and some of his "melodies" are pleasing, their phrases gracefully and prettily turned, their sentiments such as all give assent to, and creditable to their author. It was cruel of Mr. Symons to submit Moore to a contrast with his fellow-countryman, Mr. Yeats; no paper blossom, though bright as cochineal or aniline dye can make it, can stand comparison with nature. Although his work came somewhat later with *English Songs,* collected in 1832, Barry Cornwall, as Bryan Waller Procter was poetically known to his age, belongs here, not too far removed from Moore and Dibdin. Procter seems to have been one of the most lovable of men; from Lamb and Landor to Swinburne (for Procter ended a long life in 1872), men united to praise him. He appears to have united two characteristics not usually found in the same author, — a tendency to take the color of his own work from the models about him and an ability, notwithstanding, to suggest to others what he was unable to accomplish himself. As to the lyrics of Procter, they deal with the obvious obviously and, possessed of a certain singing quality, carry their light burden agreeably, alike to the ear and to the understanding. Less important are the verses for music of Thomas Haynes Bayley and the imitative lyrics of Allan Cunningham, now echoing Burns, now Dibdin, and reaching very little in very much matter. With the nonsense in song of Coleman, O'Keefe, and Theodore Hook we sink below the lyric, as in the delicious humor of John Hookham Frere, the delightful parodies of James and Horace Smith, and the biting wit of George Canning we go over to the alien domain of satire.

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[1] *Romantic Movement,* p. 200.

It is astonishing how slight was the influence of Wordsworth on the poets of his own generation. We might mention Ebenezer Elliott's early nature poetry in this connection, did not the date of *The Vernal Walk*, 1798, withstand us. Elliott was to find his niche with his *Corn-Law Rhymes* much later, and after all there is always in him more of Crabbe, invigorated with indignation and vociferous eloquence, than of Wordsworth. The poetry of Caroline Bowles Southey discloses the tender sympathy with man and nature that distinguishes Wordsworth and reaches excellence at times. The sentimentality that Mrs. Southey escaped, however, beset most of the other women of her age who wrote poetry: Felicia Dorothea Hemans, melodious and sincere; Mary Howitt, who attempted the weird and fanciful, sometimes nearly attaining success; diffuse and voluble Letitia Elizabeth (Landon) Maclean, known and beloved by the album readers of her age as "L. E. L."; Sara Coleridge, who so filially performed the duties that devolved upon her as her father's literary executor, and inherited much of his power of mind. Her *Phantasmion*, 1837, is full of lyrics of considerable originality and merit. With Sir Aubrey de Vere, who died before his master, we have a certain disciple of Wordsworth and imitator of him, especially in the sonnet religious in tone. Other sonneteers contemporary were Bernard Barton, the Quaker friend of Lamb and FitzGerald, Charles Strong, inspired by the glories of ancient Rome, and Thomas Doubleday, whose work in this kind begins as early as 1818. Passing among other minor poets, the lyrics, fierce and oriental, of Dr. John Leyden, linguist and indefatigable traveller; the poems for childhood of Ann and Jane Taylor, who are responsible, for example, for "Twinkle, twinkle, little star"; and the over-praised mediocrity of such names as that of Henry Kirke White, we note the poets of one poem, — among many, South African Thomas Pringle, praised by Coleridge for his "Afar in the desert," still popular in anthologies; Blanco White, author of at least one fine sonnet; and Charles Wolfe, who outdid Campbell in his "Hohenlinden" in the famous "Burial of Sir John Moore," a genuine lyrical success in its kind. Leigh Hunt, happy, impecunious, lovable Leigh Hunt, is possibly better remembered for his easy prose, his excellent translations, and his fascinating *Autobiography*, in which we get so just and admirable a picture of the daily life and associations of the men who were making literature during the earlier half of the century. Hunt was a sympathetic friend and critic, believing in Wordsworth and championing his poetry and his theories from the first. To his sympathy and encouragement, likewise, both Keats and Shelley owed much, and his generous spirit and discerning taste were always on the outlook for promise. The poetry of Hunt is more important historically than intrinsically. His work is unequal, at times descending to flippancy and vulgarity, the worse that both appear to have been unconscious. But Hunt was no mere trifler, and in the anecdote, "Abou Ben Adhem," and the strange dialogue, "The Fish, the Man, and the Spirit," though neither is lyrical, has done two serious and original things exceedingly well. Hunt's contributions of any permanence to the lyric comprise two or three sonnets, — "The Grasshopper and the Cricket," "The Nile," "On a Lock of Milton's Hair," and little more.

In Byron England furnished a poet to international literature for the first time; for Byron combined, as no poet before him, a transcendent personality with a power to represent certain immediate and universally interesting characteristics of the spirit of his age in memorable poetry. Byron addressed himself to the world, the response was immediate; and never was a reputation made so easily, maintained so consciously and defiantly, and, take it all in all, so justified in the event. Everything about Byron is contradictory. He came to his title when a child; but had been ill bred for his station. Handsome, gifted, and of a fascinating personality; he was reputed deformed. Devoted and magnanimous in friendship, he was as dangerous as he was faithless in love. A fashionable man of the world and a *poseur* before it, his love of liberty was so disinterested that he died for it. Byron acquiesced in things as they are, neither in society nor in literature. In religion he was sceptical without ceasing to believe; in poetry a fervent admirer of Pope, yet one of the leaders of the school of romantic revolt; in politics, a Tory nobleman who for a time praised and justified Napoleon. Byron's poetry, too, is contradictory, and upsetting to theorists. One tells us that eloquence is heard, poetry only overheard; but here is authentic poetry a condition of which is an audience. It was a need of the artistic nature of Byron that his poetry attract attention and comment, whether appreciative or adverse. Even his most despairing lyrical cry would hardly have been uttered in the deeps and solitudes that long retained the first reverberations of the poetry of Wordsworth. Praise soothed Byron while it dissatisfied him, criticism goaded him to new effort; hence the immediate effect of Brougham's very just and cruel review of *Hours of Idleness* in awakening the power and sincerity that slumbered under the pose of the young dilettante in poetry. Still we can never feel quite sure that Byron is sincere, however he scorns hypocrisy and the petty tricks of lesser egoists. Indubitably Byron deceived himself as he has deceived his readers. One wonders if he really was as wicked, as world-weary, as despairing of God and man as he believed himself to be at this, that, or the other interesting moment of his romantic career. To Byron, the adventure of sentiment was a necessity, and it was more to him in memory tinged with remorse, we may well believe, than in present enjoyment; for Byron, like every true hedonist, was an idealist; and, like every true idealist, he recognized with exquisite pain every departure from accepted standards, whether of the world's or of his own making, and measured them by their deviations.

Byron was possessed to the full of the temperament that makes for poetical expression, though not necessarily in song. His personality was too concrete, too dramatic, too self-centred for that. And while directness, eloquence, and a fine impetuosity, at times, are his, he has little of the subtler lyrical music, as indeed he knew little of that delicate fitting of word to thought by which poem, stanza, or line of perfect craftsmanship comes to be inevitably what it is. It is the large bold stroke that is Byron's, the meaning unmistakable and unfraught with refinements, with spiritual or hidden graces. And this it is that gives to Byron so wide a currency in foreign translation. His poetry suffers less, done into other tongues, than that of almost any other English poet: his thoughts are never insular. This is perhaps one of the reasons why Goethe said, in memorable words, that Byron was "different from all the rest [*i.e.*, the other English poets] and in the main greater."[1] To return to the lyrics of Byron, there are certain personal ones that have a poignancy and fervor from their autobiographical relations: "When we two parted," "Farewell, and if forever," and the "Stanzas to Augusta," for example. Others, especially in *Hebrew Melodies*, if less personal, are — that is, the best of them — of equal beauty lyrically: first among them "There be none of Beauty's daughters," "She walks in beauty like the night," and the lovely dirge, "O! snatched away in beauty's bloom." There is amazing vigor, too, if the fibre is somewhat coarse, in several poems such as "The Destruction of Sennacherib," although they trespass on narrative. In the fine ode, "The Isles of Greece," in *Don Juan*, we have the characteristic Byronic attitude of a train of revery, vividly realized, over scenes that call up the historic past and the present, so incongruous to these departed glories. Yet with these and many other successes, Byron as a lyrist is, for all his greatness, somewhat disappointing. Notwithstanding his eloquence and stormy passion, there is a sameness about this handsome, interesting, despairing lover, who tells his sorrows so volubly and with an abandon so studied for effect. Moreover the pose is not always consistently maintained, and there are times when Byron sinks in his minor lyrics to the sentimentality — rarely to the mere prettiness — of his friend, Thomas Moore. Perhaps it is not fair to look to the lyric, with its limitations of unity and definite structure, or to the sonnet's scanty plot of ground, for the wide descriptive eloquence, the fervor that images of the past call forth, the grasp of comedy, and the Titan's wielding force of scorn and satire that mark this glorious Lucifer of the romantic morning.

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[1] See Matthew Arnold's comments on Goethe's estimate of Byron, in *Essays in Criticism*, Second Series, ed. 1900, pp. 179–186.

No greater contrast can be imagined than that which exists between Byron and Shelley, in whom the former recognized, as did few of his contemporaries, a rival to his own posthumous fame. That the stock of the mad Byrons should have produced a genius who wrote comedy, sentiment, and satire, and lived tragedy, is not in itself surprising. That a race of fox-hunting squires, aristocratic, mundane, and unimaginative, should have sent forth a scion that contradicted every one of the family traits, a passionate and impractical reformer, an inspired rhapsodist in song and England's arch-lyrical poet — surely such an outcome is enough to stagger the doctrine of heredity. Nor did Shelley's surroundings do anything to modify these strange contradictions. Byron tasted the world's pleasures and retained a relish for them even after he had assured himself of their vanity. Shelley was wholly unconventional, and led always less by his passions than by his sensibilities and impulses, which were commonly as unguided by judgment as to consequences as his reforming theories were unsustained by a consideration of the means to their attainment. In the word *remorse* can be found the key to the contrasted temperaments of these two remarkable men. Every act of Byron's life produced its recoil; every sin walked with its shadow. Defiant, wanton, and wilful as were most of Byron's deflections from the conventional morality of his day, the basis of such a man's nature is moral. The moral world of Shelley had no shadows; no act was rated by its consequences, and consequences were neither foreseen nor, when untoward, deplored; Shelley was absolutely unmoral. He could never be got to understand, for example, that he was morally responsible for the suicide of his first wife, Harriet, or that the court was otherwise than tyrannically unjust in depriving him of the custody of their children after his desertion. When a literal interpretation of his own rebel code as to freedom in love took him abroad with Mary Godwin, and he heard, as he had to hear, that Harriet and their children were unhappy, he suggested that they join him and Mary, not in abandoned cynicism, but under the propulsion of a new and childish impulse, that it was a pity that any one should be unhappy. A sense of humor might have saved Shelley from this preposterous proposition; but he had scarcely an atom of humor in his inconsequential make-up. Hence it happens that one of the kindest and most impulsively generous of men, where immediate acts were concerned, practised a heartless selfishness and disregard for others that made him, when his theories "counter to God, marriage and the constitution of England" were remembered against him, even more abhorred by the proper, the conventional, and the godly of his time than Byron.

The poetry of Shelley is throughout unworldly and unruly, unsubstantial as to substance, all but perfect in its art. His reforming impulse that embraced, in his imaginativeness, the entire world and the starry interspaces, worked itself out in anathemas of dungeons, tyrants, and iniquitous law and in the apotheosis of freedom, liberty, and, above all, love. Nature, in the Wordsworthian sense of the revealing beauty of even the tiniest flower, Shelley knows nothing of; nature in Shelley's poetry is light, ether, cloud, atmosphere, or, if he descends to earth, rock, chasm, cave (a favorite word of his), or the ever-changing sea with its depths, "green and cavernous." It has been remarked that "his chief nature poem, 'To a Skylark,' loses the bird in the air, and only realizes a voice and 'unbodied joy.'"[1] Shelley's landscapes are wide and the sky chiefly appears in them; details are hopelessly unimportant and often disturbed as in a dream. He observes nature only in her large features and in her cataclysms. In the passion of Shelley there is light, radiance, and scintillation, even at times iridescence, but little warmth, steady color, or glow. Human feeling becomes, as it were, rarefied in Shelley's hands. The "Epipsychidion" is a rhapsodic apotheosis of abstract love, however Emilia Viviani may have intervened to fix on a momentary object the ranging eye of the poet. He knew Keats only by his poetry, when indignation at his alleged murder by the Edinburgh reviewers prompted his invitation to Keats to join him in Italy and fired his muse to an exquisite poetic expression of abstract friendship in "Adonais," which takes its place for all time beside Milton's "Lycidas." And when Shelley raises his voice to the praise of beauty, it is neither a hymn to beauty earthly or spiritual, Spenser's distinction, but a "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty." Indeed, to Shelley love itself is only a fitful ecstatic kind of friendship, and friendship a higher type of love, because less agitated by the emotions of sex that interfere with its purity and serenity. Few poets have been visited with more beautiful ideas than Shelley or in greater numbers; and few have been more consistently animated by noble thoughts and aspirations. Base things and unclean have no place in his writings. He seems to have been impervious to the dirt of life that at times spatters the best of his fellow-mortals. Although he recurs with a sort of fascination to images of death, crime, and horror, no poet, it has been remarked, has touched such things so absolutely without defilement. There is an elemental pure-mindedness about Shelley that made his choice of such a theme, for example, as *The Cenci*, like his treatment of it, one might almost say absolutely innocent.

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[1] Symons, *The Romantic Movement*, p. 280.

As to the quality that makes poetry lyrical, it may be affirmed literally that Shelley outsings all the English poets. For pure melody, for an exquisite adaptation of the sounds of words in their succession to the meaning of the thought, for rhapsodic outbursts and sustained flights on the sweeping aerial pinions of song, there is no one his peer. Take, for example, the ease and lithe rapidity of these two stanzas of invocation "To Night":

Swiftly walk o'er the western wave,
    Spirit of Night!
Out of the misty eastern cave, —
Where, all the long and lone daylight,

Thou wovest dreams of joy and fear,
Which make thee terrible and dear, —
Swift be thy flight!

Wrap thy form in a mantle gray,
Star-inwrought!
Blind with thine hair the eyes of Day;
Kiss her until she be wearied out.
Then wander o'er city, and sea, and land,
Touching all with thine opiate wand —
Come, long-sought!

or the completeness of this little lyric:

Music, when soft voices die,
Vibrates in the memory;
Odors, when sweet violets sicken,
Live within the sense they quicken.

Rose leaves, when the rose is dead,
Are heaped for the beloved's bed;
And so thy thoughts, when thou art gone,
Love itself shall slumber on.

In the "Indian Serenade," the rhapsodic "Skylark," the beautiful "Ode to the West Wind," and many other like poems, Shelley has reached the perfection of lyrical form and execution. Nor is he less successful in what the old critics used to call "sustained effort": the "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty," already mentioned, the "Ode to Liberty," the beautiful "Stanzas written in Dejection," and the "Lines written in the Euganean Hills," all are flights supported at a surprisingly high level. Shelley is a sovereign metrist; he manages trochaic and anapestic metres (as in "The Sensitive Plant") with a perfect mastery, and he is resourceful in metrical devices as he is inventive of new and elaborate stanzas. The "Stanzas written in Dejection" are Spenserian save that octosyllables have been substituted for decasyllables, although the final alexandrine is preserved; the "Ode to Naples" is elaborately Pindaric. Yet with all this melody, beauty, radiance, enthusiasm, and song, why is it that Shelley can never wholly satisfy? This inspired singer is not remarkable for his thought (beautiful and elevating as it commonly is), for his wisdom, insight, or any of those "humane" qualities that offer us "the consolation and the stay" that literature can give. This poet, drunk with the wine of heaven and infatuated with the glories of the sky, bids us only to look afar off into space, where light is azure and gleaming and clouds are lit with rose and gold. And for those of us who as yet have our feet on the soil of a habitable globe, a diet of sunset, however uplifting, can not alone suffice. There are those who believe that Shelley's limitations were the price that he paid for his matchless gift of song. However that may be, the adjectives, impracticable, unavailing, and unsatisfying, are as applicable to Shelley and his poetry as are winged, luminous, angelic, and divine.

If Shelley is the poet of the air, Keats is the poet of the earth, that beautiful green world in which it is a present joy sensuously to live, alive to the colors, the scents, and sounds that nature lavishes, and conscious only too poignantly of their fragility and of the fragility of man among them. Shelley had the reform of a world at heart, if not always on his hands; poetry was the light of heaven, let into dark places to purify and dispel the mist, fog, and contagion of the wrong that man has done to man. Byron had his attitude to maintain before a listening world, his singing robes becomingly to drape about the figure of the most interesting lord and poet of his time; poetry was the vehicle, waveringly sincere and insincere, of a great personality. To Keats, alone among his fellows, was poetry alike a means and an end; and he showed a singleness of heart in his devotion to it to be paralleled only among the painters. In view of his poetic achievement, the circumstance that the father of Keats had once been a groom is as irrelevant as the fact that the mother of Ben Jonson married a bricklayer. Neither the education nor the associations of Keats were vulgar; and, save possibly for Hunt, no nickname of passing criticism was more gratuitous than that of "the Cockney School," applied to Lamb, Hunt, and Keats, men of personality and art so different. In any estimation of Keats, the brevity of his life and the tragedy that ended it must be taken into account. Keats was dead before his twenty-sixth birthday. For months he had known that he was doomed, and the sufferings of his malady were exasperated to the degree of torture by the thought that he must leave this beautiful visible world with its inspiration for poetry, and a fame among poets, great indeed, but incomplete. The notion that Keats was a weakling, mawkishly sentimental and uncontrolled, has long been given over. Keats was a man, and, face to face with death, he displayed an admirable intellectual fortitude. But never has poet possessed nerves strung to a finer, a more delicate sense of beauty; and never has artist distilled out of beauty a joy so exquisite and complete. Keats is a close and loving observer of nature; but he sees only the beautiful in her. Her warfare, her cruelty and deprivation, he neither sees nor knows; nor does he translate her in her significance to the spirit of man. Keats, with all his wealth of imagery, is unequalled in his precision of detail; what he sees he sees clearly, producing his effects of atmosphere by a cumulative mass of individual images rather than by a Shelleian endeavor to paint light. Keats is the antithesis poetically of Wordsworth, in place of whose artistic thrift he practised a spendthrift liberality, in place of whose scrutinizing search for the hidden meaning of things, he was content to blazon in a gorgeous heraldry of his own their outward glories.

With our attention concentrated on our subject we must, to be logical, exclude some of the most distinctive poetry of Keats, *Endymion*, *Hyperion*, *Lamia*, and that marvellous bit of detailed description the unfinished "Eve of St. Mark," as well as the exquisitely finished "Eve of St. Agnes." The shorter and more strictly lyrical poems, with much that was immature and more that was only posthumously published, include at least a score of poems that yield to none in our language for sustained and superlative excellence and beauty. The splendid Odes "To a Nightingale," "On a Grecian Urn," "Bards of Passion," and the jovial "Lines on the Mermaid Tavern," couched in the lithe octosyllables the Elizabethan secret of which Keats surprised, the beautiful lines "To Autumn," the creed of the romanticists set forth in the fervid lines "Sleep and Poetry," and "I stood tiptoe upon a little hill" (though these are not strictly lyric) — who does not know them as among the choicest of English poems? Keats wrote many sonnets, not all of them equally successful, some of them, such as the one "On first Looking into Chapman's Homer," "To Fame," "The Grasshopper and Cricket," among the best in the language. The following, not much quoted in anthologies, has a grace of its own:

Nymph of the downward smile and sidelong glance,
  In what diviner moments of the day
  Art thou most lovely? When gone far astray
Into the labyrinths of sweet utterance,
Or when serenely wand'ring in a trance
  Of sober thought? Or when starting away
  With careless robe to meet the morning ray
Thou spar'st the flowers in thy mazy dance?
Haply 't is when thy ruby lips part sweetly,
  And so remain because thou listenest:
But thou to please wert nurtured so completely
  That I can never tell what mood is best.
I shall as soon pronounce which Grace more neatly
  Trips it before Apollo than the rest.

But such, after all, is not the most distinctive work of Keats. It is the touch of magic that presaged the pre-Raphaelites and the Celtic revival for which Keats stands historically memorable. This is the touch of "La Belle Dame sans Merci" which has all the magical charm and the weird suggestiveness of "Christabel" itself, without the waves and passes of legerdemain that mark that famous effort.

. . . .

I saw pale kings, and princes too,
Pale warriors, death-pale were they all;
Who cry'd — "La belle Dame sans Merci
Hath thee in thrall!"

I saw their starv'd lips in the gloam
With horrid warning gaped wide,
And I awoke and found me here
On the cold hill's side.

And this is why I sojourn here
Alone and palely loitering,
Though the sedge is wither'd from the lake,
And no birds sing.

This is the absolute simplicity of perfectly assured art. It is difficult to follow those that find in Keats a decadent note. Sensitive to every impression of the senses and sensuous in the enjoyment of them, Keats, judged at large, is pure as mother earth is pure. Disease wrought havoc on the nerves of the man and he cried out in anguish; but his mind ruled him to the last, as it ruled to shape and inform his imperishable poetry.

Youngest of the great lights of the romantic school, Keats was the first to die. In 1822, the year following, Shelley was drowned; and two years after, Byron died of fever at Missolonghi in Greece. Neither Keats nor Shelley left the world assured of the fame in store for him. The public that called for ten editions of *Irish Melodies* in some twenty years, that approved Rogers and Campbell, and read the narratives of Scott for lyrical poetry, could have made nothing of the ecstasies of Shelley or the raptures of Keats. The poetry of Byron was of a more comprehensible nature, and, aided by his lordship and the scandals about him, compelled attention and admiration, every voice, even those raised against him adding fresh laurels to his fame. During the twenties and early thirties Byron carried everything before him. He silenced Scott and threw Wordsworth for the nonce into an almost total eclipse. To the young and romantic he was the ideal poet and hero; and the few who hesitated to attempt to write like him at least endeavored to despond and despair with him. Deeper influences, however, were also at work in poetry. The tide of Wordsworth was soon to return bearing back what was best in his poetry to final acceptance. The popularity of Burns and Scott continued potent, especially in Scotland. More important, the study of Elizabethan authors, to which Lamb and Hazlitt had pointed a way that Coleridge had irregularly blazed, was soon to manifest itself in a remarkable series of dramas, belonging in point of composition mostly to the years following the death of Byron, and the work of Wells, Darley, Horne, Wade, and, above all, of Beddoes. The influence of Coleridge, Shelley, and Keats on younger poets came later and belongs, in its fullness, to the new wave of romanticism that animated so variously the poets of the reign of Victoria.

Descending, then, to the many lesser men who added their voices to this tuneful lyrical chorus, there was the lyrically devotional John Keble, a voice premonitory of the Oxford Movement to come. The year 1827 has been described as "a kind of *annus mirabilis* of religious verse." In it appeared not only *The Christian Poet*, one of the many volumes of copious James Montgomery, but *The Course of Time* by Robert Pollok, the posthumously published *Hymns* of Bishop Heber, and Keble's first volume, *The Christian Year*. Modern times have not been productive of writers of hymns and devotional verse who have happened likewise to be poets of mark. None of the names just mentioned contradict this assertion, nor do those of Bishop Mant nor Milman the historian. Keble alternates faint echoes of the Wordsworthian cult of nature with an earnest and ritualistic piety. Only a fellow churchman or a Tory critic could have thought for a moment of comparing Keble's poetry, in its uniform clerical black and white, with gorgeous and fervid George Herbert.[1] A far truer poet was John Clare, who was born a pauper and died insane; but who sang with loving tenderness and in true poetic spirit of the natural objects that surrounded his life of toil and misery in the village and country-side that inspired him. There were, too, the Scotchmen, John Gibson Lockhart, biographer of Scott, who opened up Spanish minstrelsy to British readers in his *Ancient Spanish Ballads*, translated with a spirit that gives them a place of their own in English poetry;

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[1] For a sane estimate of Keble, see A. C. Benson, "Poetry of Keble," *Essays*, 1896, p. 184.

William Thom, who continued Scottish traditional song and balladry where Tannahill and Hogg had left it; and William Motherwell, who tried lyrics in the manner of nearly everybody and succeeded in bettering Campbell at least and in tapping, in his *Norse Poems*, a new lyrical vein. A choicer spirit informs the sonnets and other lyrics of Hartley Coleridge, who inherited all his father's inertia and hesitating indolence with an insufficient draught of his poetic genius. Hartley Coleridge's master and model was Wordsworth and, what is more, Wordsworth at his best; yet despite some memorable sonnets and a song or two, such as "She is not fair to outward view" (of which Wordsworth himself might have been proud), both the poet and his work leave on the mind an impression of ineffectiveness. Passing Thomas Love Peacock, best recollected, notwithstanding a lyric or so of distinction, for his incomparable wit and humor in rime, John Hamilton Reynolds, friend and companion in poetic adventure of Keats, and Laman Blanchard, preacher, jester, and writer of society verses, we reach in Hood the most gifted of the poets that fall between the early romanticists and the great Victorians.

It was the misfortune of Thomas Hood that he was compelled to earn his bread by his pen, and that his clever wit and a readiness amounting to genius as a punster should have obscured, to those who knew him only popularly, the finer qualities that distinguish his serious poetry. Hood's life was one of continued struggle against ill fortune and ill health; and he maintained it bravely, using his humor as a mask for suffering and a relief from the drudgery of daily literary toil. Most of the great poets, whose names we have passed in review, were notable for the singleness of their mood, when all is told: the meditative calm of Wordsworth, the eloquent despair of Byron, Keats and the apotheosis of beauty. Hood suffered in his versatility, which ranged from the wildest fun and nonsense to a mastery of tragical remorse, of supernatural dread and of pathos almost unequalled, from the twist of a word into an epigram to a Keats-like delight in the details of the changing seasons ("Autumn"), and to sonnets (those especially to "Death" and "Silence" for example) of a depth and gravity that Wordsworth might not have disdained. The hand of Hood is firm and he is always the controlling artist in his best work, excelling in metrical inventiveness and daring, as in the marvellously sustained and absolutely successful dactylics and triple rimes of "The Bridge of Sighs." But if Hood shared some of these poetical gifts with the greater poets, in his two most famous poems (that just named and "The Song of the Shirt"), he shared, too, that bitter indignation at the wrongs and sorrows of humanity that dignified the baldness of Crabbe and roused the generous eloquence of Ebenezer Elliott in his *Corn Law Rhymes.* Only Hood could have lifted the slave of the needle and the tragedy of lost womanhood into the rarefied atmosphere of poetry; for poetry these two universal songs are, despite their bitterness and their scathing arraignment of the cruelty of man to his own kind. The pity, the tenderness, the certainty and outspoken naturalness of it all — there are no poems of their kind such as these; and their burning words, from the world's utilitarian point of view, are worth many odes to skylarks, nightingales, and linnets, for the material betterment that they wrought.

It might be difficult to find four writers more in contrast as men and authors than Macaulay, Praed, Mangan, and Barnes; indeed, only their likeness in years and the circumstance that they all began to write well before the accession of Queen Victoria could justify the treatment of them together. As to his verse, Lord Macaulay is the lineal descendant of Sir Walter Scott; for to both, the picturesque aspect of history, with a vivid reproduction of what each takes to be the mood of the time, is the main consideration. Macaulay wrote the ringing lines of his "Battle of Naseby" when he was twenty-four, little exaggerating his own Whig spirit in the mask of his "Obadiah Bind-their-Kings-in-Chains-and-their-Nobles-with-Links-of-Iron"; and it was to this method that he afterwards adhered in his popular *Lays of Ancient Rome.* Whether these swinging rhetorical verses are to be designated poetry any more than Scott's ready narratives in verse may be argued by those interested in these nice distinctions. Macaulay's lines vibrate like blasts of the trumpet, and they are as clamorous and as brazen. But the instrument is fitted to the tune, and whether we prefer the lute or the zither is a matter impertinent. The impetus that Macaulay gave to the martial historical lyric has continued in a well-defined line of writers to our own day. Motherwell, with his "Cavalier's Song" and "Trooper's Ditty," was prior it is true, and Aytoun's *Lays of the Scottish Cavaliers*, 1848, were perhaps equally inspired by Scott. But with Richard Monckton Milnes's *Poems Legendary and Historical*, 1844, we have honorable if not always successful imitation; and with Sir Francis Doyle, successor to Matthew Arnold in the chair of poetry at Oxford much later, we have Macaulay's metallic heroic note, now translated with the current of the time to the scene of England's broad world empire, and suggesting, we may feel sure, the fanfare of imperialism that is still resounding in our ears. Noble and stirring poems are Doyle's "The Private of the Buffs" and "The Red Thread of Honor." Less notable, though stirred by the martial spirit of the moment, are the lyrics of the Crimean War, Gerald Massey's *War Waits*, Sidney Dobell's *England in Time of War*, and Dobell's and Alexander Smith's *Sonnets of the War*.

Returning to pre-Victorian times, Winthrop Mackworth Praed, like Macaulay, was a brilliant collegian and trained for the bar. Like Macaulay, too, Praed combined authorship with a busy Parliamentary career, cut short by his untimely death, in 1839, at the age of thirty-seven. Praed is easily the first among the poets who wrote *vers de société* in his day. In his best verses of the type, he habitually treads with light and certain step the perilous way that winds between the heartlessness of satire and sentiment grown mawkish. In absolute contrast with this self-contained and sufficient art of Praed, so observant and so artistically objective, is the original and intensely personal poetry of James Clarence Mangan. Of humble origin in Dublin, Mangan toiled for years as a copyist in a scrivener's office, dividing his hard-earned pittance with relatives needier than himself. Of a shrinking nature, given to analysis of his own feelings, in ill health and intemperate in desperation at times, Mangan passed a life of such seclusion that we really know very little of its details. He appears to have mastered several out-of-the-way languages, though his native Irish was apparently not among them; and he left behind him many poems that purported to be translations from Hafiz, Mesihi, and other oriental poets; as others were modelled on old Gaelic traditions, though how closely or whether not largely his own, remain matters problematic. Mangan's range as a lyrist is limited, but intensely the expression of himself. His despair rings true and is no echo of Byron's. In a vivid poem, entitled "The Nameless One," he bids his song "roll forth" and

> Tell how, with genius wasted,
> Betrayed in friendship, befooled in love,
> With spirit shipwrecked, and young hopes blasted,
> He still, still strove;
>
> . . . .
>
> And tell how now, amid wreck, and sorrow,
> And want, and sickness, and houseless nights,
> He bides in calmness the silent morrow
> That no ray lights.

There is a cry of the heart in lines like these superior even to "Dark Rosaleen," Mangan's best known lyric and itself a glorious allegorical expression of fervid patriotism. In any anthology of Irish verse Mangan sits among the princes. In "Dark Rosaleen" and elsewhere he appears to have anticipated the music of repetition afterwards so effectively developed by Poe. William Barnes, memorable for his poems in the Dorset dialect, was a remarkably versatile man alike in the range of his study and literary work and in the various vocations of schoolmaster, engraver, musician, and philologist. Barnes is no such singer as we find even among some of the lesser followers of Burns, but the lyrical spirit is in him, and he has distilled genuine poetry out of the familiar happenings of rural life and raised his provincial dialect of Dorsetshire to a place in literature.

The revival of the literary drama that came between the publication of Shelley's *Cenci*, in 1819, and the accession of Victoria cannot be discussed here. This revival was due, in the main, to the renewed study and reading of Elizabethan drama, and the occasional lyrics that it inspired echo those of the old age. There are no lyrics in Wells's *Joseph and his Brethren* with which this revival began; and the lyrical poetry of Thomas Wade, especially his sonnets, justly described as "thoughtful, tender, original, and strong," does not occur in his several dramas.[1] The varied and interesting poetry, too, of Richard Henry Horne, dramatic, epic, narrative, and didactic, yields very few poems that are strictly lyrical. The lyrist of the group is that strange reincarnation of the genius that animated Webster or Tourneur, contorted with a strand of modern introspection, Thomas Lovell Beddoes; and his is an isolated and distinctive position among our modern poets. Beddoes is practically a man of a single work, *Death's Jest Book*, a tragedy of rare poetic and literary value, published in 1850, the year after the poet's death by his own hand. It belongs in point of plan and composition to his early manhood. Beddoes, like Wells, held complaisant mediocrity in a haughty disdain. To quote his own words: "It is good to be tolerable, or intolerable, in any other line; but Apollo defend us from brewing all our lives at the quintessential pot of the smallest ale Parnassian."[1] The lyrics of Beddoes are unequal in execution, however the animating force of poetry may sustain them. At his best, for a weird originality of thought and a competence, if not always a music of expression, they will hold their own with the best. John Webster would have compassed the effect of this stanza more vigorously, but hardly would even he have bettered it:

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[1] Wade's *Fifty Sonnets* are reprinted in *Literary Anecdotes of the Nineteenth Century*, 1895, London.

Young soul, put off your flesh, and come
With me into the silent tomb,
  Our bed is lovely, dark, and sweet;
The earth will swing us, as she goes,
Beneath our coverlid of snows,
  And the warm leaden sheet.
Dear and dear is their poisoned note,

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[1] Quoted by R. Garnett in his article on Beddoes, Miles, *Poets of the Century*, Keats to Lytton, n. d., p. 524.

> The little snakes' of silver throat,
> In mossy skulls that nest and lie,
> Ever singing "die, oh! die."

As to the other names of dramatic note in these pre-Victorian days, the songs of Sir Henry Taylor, whether in *Philip van Artevelde* or elsewhere, are really pitiful for a Southeyan of such estimable repute; and those of Bulwer, Lord Lytton, which are equally remote from the influences of our earlier poets, belong to the easy, trivial school of Moore and Procter, touched with the prevalent Byronism.

In this chapter we have considered the leaders of the romantic revival and enumerated some of their lesser brethren who wrote lyrically. We have treated many who, although they began to write earlier, wrote on into the reign of Queen Victoria. We must defer to the next chapter such as began to write only in her reign or those whose actual poetical activity received the impetus that placed it in its true orbit subsequent to the queen's accession. The thirties wrought havoc among the poets; Scott and Crabbe died in 1832, Coleridge and Lamb in 1834, Hogg a year later. Among the names mentioned above, Southey, Hood, and Darley lived on into the forties, the two latter active in literature to the last. Moore closed his long career with his *Poetical Works* in ten volumes, 1840–41, and lived on for nearly a dozen years; Hunt wrote to the last, publishing *Stories in Verse* as late as 1855, four years before his death. Procter's work like that of Peacock, Elliott, Wells, and several others, belonged, by Victoria's time, to the past. Wells and Peacock survived into the seventies; Taylor, Barnes, and Horne, into the eighties. But among the veterans of early nineteenth-century poetry, Wordsworth and Landor alone continued productive far into the reign. Wordsworth wrote and published poetry in six decades; Landor in eight, bridging the age of Cowper and that of Tennyson, Browning, and Swinburne, whither we are now to follow him.

CHAPTER VII

THE VICTORIAN LYRISTS

WITH the great Victorian laureate dead, even now only a score of years, and his throne unfilled, however occupied — as who could fill that spacious chair of regal poetic state? — it seems all but incredible that verse of Alfred Tennyson's should have seen print in the year 1826. It was in that year that *Poems by Two Brothers* (there were really three) was published with little promise, it must be confessed, of the glory that was to come. Nor were Tennyson's first unaided poetical efforts, the volumes of 1830 and 1832, however promising to discerning minds, wholly undeserving of the disapproval that the *Quarterly Review* and *Blackwood's* meted out to them. But Tennyson was not born to failure; and, unlike most men of sensitive poetic endowment, an iron will nerved him to snatch success from defeat. For ten years he was silent, undiverted by temptation to other occupations, living simply and with economy as he untiringly perfected his art; and with the *Poems* of 1842, the added ones and those revised, it was known — if still only to the few — that another great English poet had arisen to maintain the high traditions of the past. The Tennysons were gentle folk, and all that tradition, restraint, cultivated surroundings, college life, and reverence could do for him had part in the poet's education. Neither passion, ill health, nor extreme poverty assailed him; and soon popular acclaim was his. He succeeded Wordsworth as poet laureate in 1850, and was raised to the peerage as Lord Tennyson in 1884. A chronology of the books of poems of Tennyson, contributed to the *Memoir* of his life by his son, comprises sixty-three items from the early issues just mentioned to a complete one volume edition in 1894, two years after the poet's death; and this by no means includes all separate and foreign issues. Tennyson's later years reaped a golden reward, and the popularity of his poetry in his lifetime was such as no English poet had known before him.

Tennyson grew up with poetry about him. His two brothers wrote other verse besides their first joint endeavor. Charles, who took the name of Turner on succeeding to his uncle's estates, was an excellent sonneteer after the Wordsworthian manner. Frederick, after a first volume, *Days and Hours*, in 1854, recurred to poetry in his elder years, and more resembles, in weaker mould, the poetic lineaments of his great brother. Both suffered from his august shadow as who save the greatest might not? Tennyson's friend, too, Arthur Hallam, in whose memory he wrote the magnificent requiem, "In Memoriam," left at his untimely death some estimable minor poetry; and Edward FitzGerald, whose affectionate enthusiasm never allowed that there was a greater Tennyson than that of the first fruitage of the volume of 1842, afterwards attained for himself an enviable popularity as one who bettered the translations that he made to give to the dead, especially in *Omar Khayyám*, a living repute. The earliest literary influence on Tennyson was indubitably that of Keats. A similar definition of line, clarity of vision, capability in descriptive detail, and limpidity of diction are common to both; and both are ruled by the spirit of beauty. But Tennyson has neither the passion of Keats nor his sensuous glow of color. However, Tennyson did not stop here. Wordsworth in his narrative poetry and "subjective view of nature," Spenser in his pictorial mediævalism, Shakespeare for the lilt of his song — all these had Tennyson studied. There are touches of the Byronic despair in *Maud*, and he disdained not the hectic art of the pre-Raphaelites, his contemporaries, in an occasional lyric, though neither sits naturally upon him. As to the classics, never has poet so absorbed them and so skilfully and legitimately employed reminiscence to illustrate and glorify his lines. If there is a quality in poetry peculiarly Tennyson's, it is the quality of distinction. He elevates whatever he touches, not so much because he transfigures common things as because of his deft selection of what is fit for noble and decorative treatment. Tennyson is a past master in all the graces of his art; awkwardness, obscurity, carelessness, and a medium unfitted to the poetical ends of the moment are intolerable to him and, in his finished poetry, unknown. In the realm of his beautiful art, taste rules perennial; however ornate and elaborate, all is fitting, moderate, fashioned to a nicety and, at need, restrained to the artistic purposes in hand. Tennyson is a great technician, and his example has raised the art of English poetry to a higher level. This is especially true of his songs, which often have a witching melody of words combined with a deeper harmony of spirit that is unmatchable elsewhere. Take, for example, the wistful passion of "O that 't were possible," the delicious babble of the "Song of the Brook," the tread of arms in "The Charge of the Light Brigade," and a hundred other perfect lyrics our very familiarity with which causes us critically to do them less than justice. Take, too, on the score of its novelty as well as its beauty and touch with modern science, this supremely original invocation which no repetition in quotation can stale:

Move eastward, happy earth, and leave
   Yon orange sunset waning slow:
From fringes of the faded eve,
   O happy planet, eastward go;
Till over thy dark shoulder glow
   Thy silver sister-world, and rise
   To glass herself in dewy eyes
That watch me from the glen below.

Ah, bear me with thee, smoothly borne,
   Dip forward under starry light,
And move me to my marriage-morn,
   And round again to happy night.

In a consideration of the lyrical poetry of Tennyson apart from his dramas, the *Idylls*, and other narrative verse, we are confronted with the increasing difficulty of preserving a clear line of demarcation. No one could pause to question the absolute lyrical quality of the song in "The Brook," "Break, break, break," or the exquisite songs of *The Princess*, "The splendor falls" and "Tears, idle tears." But there are scores of beautiful poems in Tennyson the essence of which is poetic description, which convey none the less the impression of a single mood however they may suggest a situation. A lyrical quality inheres in them all to a greater or less degree. Such are the early poems on fair women, "Mariana," "Madeline," and the rest, of which it has been profanely said that they have the family likeness of the perfect, conventional beauty preserved in the engravings of the old gift-books. But such, too, in fuller degree, are the beautiful classic "Œnone," descriptive and narrative to a certain extent though it be, the tender and thoughtful "De Profundis," a poem of solemn welcome to the poet's new-born son, dramatic lyrics such as "The Two Sisters," and the effective and touching "Rizpah." Even "In Memoriam," best described as a sequence of elegies bound together by one pervading sense of irreparable loss, is in its subjective introspection as truly lyrical as "Adonais" itself. Of the four great English elegies of friendship, "Lycidas," "Adonais," "Thyrsis," and "In Memoriam," the last is the most elaborate, the longest, and that in which, without losing any of its poignancy, mourning friendship is most effectively universalized. Less than half of the poem deals directly with Tennyson's sorrow for his dead friend, Arthur Hallam; the rest displays the author's philosophy of life in terms the beauty, the poetic charm, and music of which are its best claim to the regard of posterity. Yet it is just this intrusion into poetry of his philosophy and what is far worse his politics (both of which are ephemeral) that gave the poem its popularity; as it is this same intrusion which has caused the great repute of the poet sensibly to wane in the generation that knew not his works when they canvassed living issues. Tennyson is conventional in his religion, his politics, his philosophy, and in his criticism of life, and he threads ever with circumspection the safe, the unenthusiastic, the uninspired middle way. For the great problems of life and death, however he may invoke the discoveries of sciences and the ratiocinations of rationalistic thought, he has no real solution, and his religiosity in the face of his half-hearted scepticism, leaves us almost in doubt at times as to his candor. Unquestionably there was in this great artist a fastidious shrinking from the decisive, the disagreeable, the inevitable, a want of sympathy with much in life that has appealed and ever will appeal to the generous-hearted and truly liberal-minded, and hence a frequent substitution of sentiment for feeling, of the correct attitude (all things considered) for that divine extravagance and forgetfulness of self that constitutes the magnanimous partisanship of a generous soul. Tennyson became deservedly the most popular of Victorian poets because, with a distinction of poetic style and diction all but unmatched and an artistry incomparable, he contrived to translate the current ideas of his time into the terms of exquisite poetry and to conjure, as with a magician's wand, a transfigured picture of a chivalrous age that never was save in the poet's picturesque imagination. Tennyson's poetry is like some commodious and hospitable modern structure that seeks not ambitiously to peer into the sky nor assumes a false lowliness; broad, beautiful, fitted artistically to the needs of men and women of modern cultivation and correctness of conduct and thought, but neither the harborer of the mystic who dwells among the beatitudes of heaven, nor a refuge for the lowly and sin-worn wayfarer whose need is consolation in the rough ways of the world.

To turn from Tennyson to Robert Browning is to encounter one of the most striking contrasts in all literature; and nothing so argues the range, the sweep, and breadth of the Victorian age as this existence in it, side by side, of two giants in poetry, each so complete in his own greatness, each so diverse in spirit, art, and ideals of life. Were our consideration in this book the poetry of Browning at large, difficult *Paracelsus* should claim our attention, impracticable *Sordello, Strafford, A Blot in the 'Scutcheon,* and the rest of the dramas with their wealth of thought, their psychological discernment, and their effective eloquence so often ineffectively misplaced. But we are fortunately here concerned with that indubitably greater Browning whose deep and varied lyricism, like his daring idealism, the product of a rich, fervid, and amazingly honest nature, places him irremovably among the very greatest of English poets. And here, even more than in the case of Tennyson, is the chronicler of the lyric at a loss to know where to draw the line of distinction between what we have been wont to accept without question as lyrical poetry and those contiguous provinces into which trespasses the objectiveness of narration or surges the passion of the drama. Of the former, with its cool aloofness, the poetry of Browning furnishes few examples: that was the province of Tennyson. As to the dramatic lyric, Browning may be said almost to have created it. He loves to take a dramatic situation and flash the light of intuitive discovery upon the passions that arise out of it. He delights to let an imagined personage, often realized with the fewest possible strokes, betray the life that he has led, the secrets of his inmost soul, under stress of the revealing moment. This is sometimes called Browning's power of psychological analysis; but it has often neither the leisurely unfolding of argument nor the remoteness and suppression of feeling that should properly characterize a process so allied to the frigid inquiries of science. "Sludge the Medium," "Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau," or even "The Bishop Orders his Tomb at Saint Praxed's" may correctly enough be classified as products of such an analysis, however conducted by means of monologue or dialogue; but the instant art of "Porphyria's Lover," "In a Gondola," or "My Last Duchess" is essentially lyrical for its concision, unity of emotion, and intensity, inasmuch as such poems are written not for the situation (much less for the presentation of events in sequence) but for the emotion or passion involved, which to Browning is always the main thing. If we must have a name for something at once so distinctive and recognizable, we might call such poems lyrics of projected emotion. Drama they are not, for they have neither the potentiality of struggle nor development by means of sequence of event. The emotion is transfused, it is true, into the personages involved; but the insight, the clarity of vision that flashes upon the momentary situation a light that reveals the past that has led to it, both in its relation to its present environment and therefore to all the world of right and wrong, this is the poet's own, as subjective in its quality as the veritable utterance of his own heart.

Like Tennyson, Browning was neither subjected to the stress of need that hurries unwilling steps along unchosen paths, nor could wayward passion ever have shaken a nature so essentially wholesome, vigorous, and humane. Unlike Tennyson, Browning's education was less that regular submission to the accepted processes of culture, hallowed by the consent of generations, than the desultory gathering in of many influences, guided by innate taste, curiosity, and a thirst to know the mainsprings of the thoughts and consciences of his fellow-men. Religious dissent, less personal than inherited, long sojourn in foreign lands, association with men of different race and station from his own, leisure to work, think, and write as he would — all these things went to the humanizing of the poet. In consequence there is an unconventionality about Browning, an openness of spirit, an ingenuous unconsciousness of precedent and of that correctness of procedure based on much pondering of the past that was characteristic of the narrower and more self-centred genius of Tennyson. The immediate inspiration of Browning's boyhood's muse was Shelley and, to a lesser degree, Keats; but to neither did his strong-thewed poetic genius submit to the degree that makes any of his work merely imitative. Between Browning and Shelley there is the kinship of that fervid idealism that counts neither means nor consequences where an eternal principle is involved. For Shelley's questionings and wilful revolt against constituted authority where it comes into conflict with ideas, Browning substituted an optimistic faith in the essential goodness and harmony of God's world that nothing could shake or dismay. Browning began his career as a poet with the publication of *Pauline* in 1833, admitted to his later collected works only on sufferance. The often repeated tale that the earlier volumes of Browning were failures, neglected by reader and critic alike where not hailed by the latter with outrageously adverse criticism, has been conclusively disproved. Browning's strong personality attracted attention from the first, and he acquired instantaneous recognition among the few that read and care for poetry. Wordsworth, Landor, Carlyle, and many lesser men of letters at once acclaimed him and became his friends; though, after his first volumes, he suffered from the rank and file of readers and reviewers a long neglect, and even as late as the death of Mrs. Browning, in 1861, her popularity eclipsed that of her husband. But no personality so virile, no art so aggressively independent and self-assured as Browning's, could fail to call down the anathemas of those who follow precedents instead of creating them. And, indeed, there was much, and remained no less, in the poetic art of Browning that was crabbed, difficult, and hard even for his friends to justify. Happily his obscurity, his eccentricities, later to become more and more confirmed, his predilection for prosaic casuistry and attention in verse to themes in their natures incapable of yielding to the spirit and the embellishments of poetry, none of these things concern us in the consideration of that choicer element, almost always present, at times almost unexpectedly, in his lyrical poetry.

Of lyrics in the strictest acceptation of the term, the song of love, of war, of nature, Browning has written his share, many of them among the most beautiful poems in the language. Where, indeed, shall we find surpassed the verbal richness of the song from *Paracelsus* beginning,

> Heap cassia, sandal-buds and stripes
> Of labdanum, and aloe-balls,

the gallop and clatter of the "Cavalier Tunes," the thoughtful beauty of "Evelyn Hope," or the rapture of the lines,

> Nay but you, who do not love her,
> Is she not pure gold, my mistress?
> Holds earth aught — speak truth — above her?
> . . . .
> Above this tress, and this, I touch
> But cannot praise, I love so much!

More frequently Browning places his lyrics in the setting of a dramatic situation; as, for example, the passionate song on the moth's kiss and the bee's of "In a Gondola," or the incomparable songs of *Pippa Passes.* From the last, take the following as peculiarly illustrative of the revealing flash on a momentary situation, alluded to above:

> Give her but a least excuse to love me!
> When — where —
> How — can this arm establish her above me,
> If fortune fixed her as my lady there,
> There already, to eternally reprove me?
> ("Hist!" — said Kate the Queen;
> But "Oh!" cried the maiden, binding her tresses,
> "'T is only a page that carols unseen,
> Crumbling your hounds their messes!")
>
> Is she wronged? — To the rescue of her honor,
> My heart!
> Is she poor? — What costs it to be styled a donor?
> Merely an earth to cleave, a sea to part.
> But that fortune should have thrust all this upon her!
> ("Nay, list!" — bade Kate the Queen;
> And still cried the maiden, binding her tresses,
> "'T is only a page that carols unseen,
> Fitting your hawks their jesses!")

If we enlarge our conception of the lyric as suggested in the paragraph before the last, in number as in quality — the quality of an intense and sincere individuality — Browning is at once one of the most productive and in many respects the choicest lyrist of the Victorian age. His range is a dozen times that of the laureate, and his music, while less technically faultless, is far more varied and of a deeper, richer tone. In Browning's poetry, distinction of style and happiness of phrase — both of which at need are present — are swept away in a sincerity of passionate utterance that makes the mere consideration of such things a prating about idle baubles. Where other poets leave us coolly critical of their skill or warmed at most with approbation, Browning carries us away and leaves us glowing with the emotion that he inspires. This can be said of few lyrical poets in our critical age, atrophied as we are in feeling, intellectually satisfied wholly with naught.

The history of literature knows no parallel to the beautiful marriage of Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett. Sofa-ridden she had been almost from childhood, a recluse save for the small circle about her, when her strong, hopeful lover burst like the sunlight into her darkened room and carried her away into life and happiness. Elizabeth Barrett was remarkably precocious, publishing, in 1820 (when no more than a child), an epic in three books on the battle of Marathon and *An Essay on Mind* not much later. In both the Popean couplet rules supreme, a verse with its great author then recently championed by Byron against the attacks of Bowles; and Byron himself, ill followed, was among Miss Barrett's models in her earliest lyrical verse. With the translation of *Prometheus Bound*, published with other poems in 1833, and the steady stream of four successive volumes between 1835 and 1844, the fame of Miss Barrett as the first of English poetesses became firmly established. In fact, by 1846, when she became Mrs. Browning, the recognition accorded her was far more certain than that of her husband; and she died in 1861 with a repute which Browning himself had by no means as yet attained. Mrs. Browning's was a life full of noble aspiration; poetry was to her no mere art, the invalid's diversion, but a weapon wherewith to fight for the liberty of her beloved Italy and for the betterment of the downtrodden about her. These things have stamped many of her longer poems with the ephemeral characteristics that belong to all applied art. With a power of feeling often as exquisite as it is always sincere, Mrs. Browning combined a facility of expression that betrayed her at times into diffuseness and a profusion of detail. Unfortunately this, with the inequality of her mastery over rhythm and rime, is precisely the thing which is most certain to defeat lyrical success. We find poem after poem beginning well, but sustained too long or in a tone that substitutes thought about emotion for the emotion itself. Where natural feeling is concerned, as in the touching "Child's Grave at Florence," Mrs. Browning is seldom at fault; but she was emulous of more ambitious things, and her ambitions and her social sympathies, as in *Aurora Leigh,* carried her beyond the wide borders of poetry, however poetical and memorable this story in verse remains in parts. Mrs. Browning's religious feeling, which is strong if conventional, produced some excellent hymns; a romantic spirit, less pronounced however, rules in such fine poems as "Bertha in the Lane" and "Lady Geraldine's Courtship," or the spirited "Rhyme of the Duchess May" (though no one of them is strictly lyrical), while the genuine pathos of "Cowper's Grave" must always find an honorable place among shorter English elegies.

In contrast with her great husband, Mrs. Browning displays a sure touch in the sonnet, although she manages its effects of varied music in a manner that falls short of the greatest sonneteers. It was Browning's love that inspired in her the finest outburst of lyricism, the fervid, passionate *Sonnets from the Portuguese,* which remain unparalleled in English poetry as the only extended as well as the choicest expression of a woman's love. It is of interest to remember that these burning poems, with their abandon to the exaltation of love as to the lover's overwhelming sense of her own unworthiness, were written during the days of courtship, but not shown to their subject, Browning, until after the lovers' marriage, nor published until years later. Take the sonnet, "How do I love thee?" or "If thou must love me, let it be for nought," and we must go back to Sappho of Mytilene for the confession by a woman of a woman's love of equal fervor and poetic beauty. Mrs. Browning's love made her otherwise lyrically vocal, as a dozen beautiful poems, "Life and Love," "Change upon Change," "A Denial," and other lyrics show. But in *Sonnets from the Portuguese* she reached in the passion which they chronicle alike the height of fervid poetical spirit and the fulfilment of her delicate womanhood.

We have already noted other poets of her sex, Mrs. Browning's earlier contemporaries. Fanny Kemble, the accomplished actress and a most precocious dramatist, wrote much verse, some lyrical, the latest volume dating 1883. The two grand-daughters of Richard Brinsley

Sheridan, afterwards respectively Lady Dufferin and Caroline Norton (Meredith's Diana) also left each a lyric or two that claim a place in our anthologies. While that rare spirit, Emily Brontë, author of *Wuthering Heights*, in *Poems by Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell*, 1846, reaches inspiration in more than one of her contributions, especially in the noble, dauntless poem entitled "Last Lines."

No coward soul is mine,
No trembler in the world's storm-troubled sphere:
I see Heaven's glories shine,
And faith shines equal, arming me from fear.

. . . .

Though earth and man were gone,
And suns and universes ceased to be,
And thou were left alone,
Every existence would exist in thee.

There is not room for Death,
Nor atom that his might could render void:
Thou — Thou art Being and Breath,
And what thou art may never be destroyed.

None of the younger contemporaries of their own sex (if we except Christina Rossetti, of whom more below), approximated any such poetical heights as those of Mrs. Browning. George Eliot wrote no small amount of verse; it deserves attention mainly because she was a great novelist. Dinah Maria Craik is memorable for one charming domestic poem, "Philip, my king"; Adelaide Anne Procter, daughter of Barry Cornwall, for another, "The Lost Chord." It was the latter who shared with Jean Ingelow the highest popularity of any poet of her sex in the late forties and fifties, and the popularity of both was based largely on their pleasing lyrics. Jean Ingelow is the better poet. Both gain by judicious sifting out of the temporary, the sentimental, and the insignificant. To pass many lesser names, a poet of finer quality and greater power than these, and even now too little known, was Augusta Webster, whose several volumes appeared between 1860 and 1887, seven years prior to her death. A dramatic rather than a lyrical quality is characteristic of Mrs. Webster's work, and this outside of her poems in accepted dramatic form, such as *Portraits*. None the less a strong lyrical spirit pervades *A Woman Sold and Other Poems*, 1865, and later volumes; witness the three stanzas entitled "Not to be," and such little pieces as the "English Stornelli" which combine the brevity, the feeling, and the unity of the best lyrical art.

The attraction of several names to our word of Mrs. Browning and the extended careers of Tennyson and Browning, reaching from the thirties to the close of the eighties and a little beyond, have carried us well forward of much in poetry that belongs to the earlier Victorian years; but even the earliest were full of minor song, and the anthologies preserve for us, among many others, the names of John Sterling, immortalized biographically by Carlyle; of Richard Chenevix Trench, last Anglican archbishop in Dublin and a Wordsworthian, chaste in diction, unaffected in piety; the accomplished and many-sided Lord Houghton; and the distinguished physician, devoted friend of Rossetti, Thomas Gordon Hake. In Scotland, too, Professor Blackie began writing in these years, a lyrist, light, fluent, and patriotic; and there was likewise the graver and more philosophical genius of William Bell Scott, a painter, as a poet, of note. Alfred Domett, Browning's "Waring," took a precocious poetical reputation away with him to New Zealand; and Sir Samuel Ferguson, author of the epic poem, *Congal*, raised among his admiring fellow-countrymen the question whether he was Ireland's long sought "national bard," or only an honorable equal of Mangan, who is at least lyrically far his superior, or the younger Aubrey de Vere who, beginning a Wordsworthian as far back as 1842 and "wavering between English, Irish, and Catholic tradition," as Mr. Yeats puts it, essayed poetry in many forms and succeeded in several.[1] There is often a fine heroic note in the poetry of Ferguson, and he has caught the mystical fatalism of his nation's belief in fairy-lore, if not quite its sustaining music, in "The Fairy Well of Lagnanay" for example. In the symbolism of such a poem as "The Little Black Rose," de Vere justifies his nationality, as in the song, "She says: 'Poor friend, you waste a treasure'" and other true lyrics, he claims a place in the larger realm of English song. In estimating his country's poets, Mr. Yeats has placed Mangan above Ferguson and Ferguson above Thomas Davis, finding in the last, as a representative of the poetry of "Young Ireland," an interference of patriotism and enthusiasm with their art as poets, yet granting Davis "much tenderness" in the simple lyric of love. Possibly it is in no one of these but in William Allingham that we are to seek the beginnings of the Irish Celtic revival that forms so interesting and well-heralded a "movement" of our own literary present. Allingham had an inborn lyrical gift, and even if, as Mr. Yeats says, "he sang Ballyshannon [his native village] and not Ireland," his very idyllic narrowness made him the truer representative of the national spirit in certain of its aspects. Like Herrick, in a very different manner, Allingham is a poet of little things and of the inspiration of little things. Mr. Yeats quotes from him these simple lines as an example of "one of the rare moments of quaint inspiration that came to him in recent years":

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[1] See "Modern Irish Poetry" and "Poetry and Tradition," *Collected Works of W. B. Yeats*, 1908, VIII.

Four ducks on a pond,
A grass-bank beyond,
A blue sky of spring,
White clouds on the wing;

What a little thing
To remember for years —
To remember with tears!

If Allingham sang of little things, Coventry Patmore was certain, with what his friends might have called the divine vanity of genius, that he sang of the greatest of all things, the love of man for woman, and that in a guise not hitherto attempted. Patmore is the laureate of wedded love, which he celebrated in *The Angel in the House*, 1852–1863, with a devotion, a facility, and a completeness — even though his first stupendous plan remained unfulfilled

—unequalled in the history of poetry. Patmore had begun imitatively, first under the influence of Mrs. Browning, secondly under that of Tennyson, as early as 1844; and in later years he achieved greater poetry, if a less repute, in a couple of volumes, *Odes* and *The Unknown Eros*, in which love is still his universal theme, though now transmuted into a symbolical, not to say an apocalyptical, reference to the deepest mysteries of religion. It has been claimed for Patmore that he created a new species of erotic poetry; and the purity, the sincerity, and the independence of his lyrical psychology is not for a moment to be questioned. Patmore, although a friend of the young pre-Raphaelites and a contributor to *The Germ*, is assuredly "a solitary specimen of an unrelated species," a man temperamentally lyrical, who strove assiduously to write poetry didactic, gnomic, and philosophical.[1] When Tennyson and the pre-Raphaelites were teaching the world a new, elaborate, and intricate prosody, Patmore adhered with undeviating devotion to a stanza derived from old balladry which, despite much intervening study and discussion by him of verse and metrical effect, was varied in his later poetry only by a facile and musical adaptation of the irregular structure of the *Odes* of Cowley, wherein the phrase is the line and the variation is dependent on the thought and on no preconceived stanzaic arrangement. Notwithstanding this and despite his tenuity, his insistence on the trivial and his banality even at times, Patmore is a poet to be reckoned with. It may not have been the best that was in him that sold a quarter of a million copies of *The Angel in the House;* and the subsequent neglect of him by the public and even by those who had been his friends may be referable to other causes than the estrangement due to his reception into the communion of Rome; still there remains an independent, passionate, and tender lyrical spirit in him which, combined with a metrical facility, unparalleled save perhaps in George Wither, will retain for the Patmore of "The Azaleas," "The Toys," or "Amelia" — to mention only these — a singular and honorable place in Victorian lyrical song.

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[1] See the interesting life by E. Gosse in *Literary Lives*, 1905, where this thesis is successfully set forth.

And now, as in the brave Elizabethan days, the gift of song spread more and more abroad, though often the lyric remained the occasional by-product of a poet devoted to other forms of verse; as, for example, in the case of Thomas Edward Brown, the Manx laureate, an excellent poet, Sir Edwin Arnold, author of the epic *The Light of Asia*, Lord Lytton, imitative, eclectic, and second class, or Lewis Morris, the Welshman, who was equally popular with these two latter as he was equally narrative and second rate. Among less popular poets who began to write far earlier than any of these was William Cox Bennet, the author of some charming domestic songs, and Francis Turner Palgrave, less memorable for his own scholarly verses than for his selection, with the powerful aid of Tennyson, of the poetry constituting the famous anthology, *The Golden Treasury of English Songs and Lyrics.* Men great in other walks of literature left lyrics behind them. Ruskin's verses, descriptive and Byronic, were written in his youth and are not distinguished; Carlyle's are terse, pregnant in thought, unmusical, not quite poetical. Thackeray was a generous and happy contributor to *vers de société* and humorous verse; there are jingles in Dickens; Kingsley's poetry is built upon the universal emotions, ringing true and tuneful. There were the possibilities of a great poet in Charles Kingsley, and it is amazing that he should have retained his singing voice in lyrics such as "Oh that we two were maying," "The Sands of Dee," and "The Three Fishers," in a life of such incessant activities remote from poetry. Varied was the mid-Victorian lyrical chorus, now voicing the national spirit of the moment (the Crimean War) in the war of poetry of unequal, "spasmodic" Dobell and sound and English-hearted Gerald Massey, both of them of copious lyrical and non-lyrical industry on other topics; now applied to political propaganda as in the *Songs of Democracy* of Ernest Charles Jones, or the satirical *Songs of the Governing Classes* by Robert Brough; now turned with William Brighty Rands, who modestly lost himself in three or four pseudonyms, to wise and dainty nonsense verses to stand beside those of Carroll, Gilbert, and Stevenson, a joy to children and their elders. There is a pathos in such a poem as "Louise on the Door-Step," by the popular journalist Charles Mackay, that is worthy of Hood; there is rhapsodic weirdness in "When the world is burning," by Ebenezer Jones, defeated in the struggle for health, life, and art; as there is a natural cry, among all the churchly leadings and agnostic throes of the times, in these lines of the classical master of Eton, William Cory:

> You promise heavens free from strife,
>   Pure truth, and perfect change of will;
> But sweet, sweet is this human life,
>   So sweet, I fain would breathe it still;
> Your chilly stars I can forego,
> This warm kind world is all I know.
>
> You say there is no substance here,
>   One great reality above:
> Back from that void I shrink in fear,
>   And childlike hide myself in love:
> Show me what angels feel. Till then,
> I cling, a mere weak man, to men.

An independent spirit moves in the interesting poetry of Robert Leighton, a busy man of affairs; and in the devotional, as in the secular lyrics of the novelist, George Macdonald, there rules a sweet wholesomeness and moral earnestness not unrelieved by delicate fancy. William James Linton, notable during a long life for his agitation of radical and republican ideas, for his skill as an engraver on wood, and a bibliophile and printer of rare books, went back to the spirit of Catullus, Campion, and Herrick in his charmingly finished lyrics of "Love-lore"; Walter Thornbury revived the life of later old days in his *Songs of the Cavaliers and Roundheads*, 1857; and Joseph Skipsey showed an unexpected kinship with the genius of Blake in his "power of making simple things seem strange and strange things simple." Even the politer poets of *vers de* *société* do not often better the condensation and point attained at times by Skipsey, who literally came up out of the coal-pits. As to these politer poets, Frederick Locker-Lampson, with a host of others, Mortimer Collins, Charles Stuart Calverley and H. S. Leigh (with the admirable satirical and nonsense verse of Lewis Carroll and William S. Gilbert), carried forward the genre and its like from Praed and Lord Houghton to Dobson and Stephen.

Though neither Tennyson nor Browning can be described in any narrow sense as devotional, far less as theological poets, a religious tone was strong from the first in the poetry of both; it waxed stronger and more clearly defined when the times came to be rent with the religious excitement of the thirties and forties. The Oxford or Tractarian Movement, as it is usually designated, concerns us in this book only in so far as it is responsible for the song that it inspired in its immediate effects and in its reaction. This movement in the Church of England appears to have arisen as a protest against the utilitarianism, the rationalism and spirit of inquiry which had begun to manifest itself toward the beginning of the second quarter of the century, and, twenty years later, was hurrying even the church into new and troubled waters. The Oxford Movement, we are informed, was "the direct result of the searchings of heart and the communings for seven years, from 1826 to 1833, of Keble, Hurrell Froude, and Newman. . . . Keble had given the inspiration, Froude had given the impetus, then Newman took up the work"; and this work consisted in the attempted revival of a questionless faith, an observation of form and ceremonial, and the cultivation of a religious fervor of heart which can only be described as mediæval.[1] The first of the famous *Tracts for the Times*, the work of Newman and other men, appeared in September, 1833, and the movement was continued by this means, and especially by Newman's eloquent and persuasive sermons. Newman's arguments had been for the *via media;* but the "middle way" turned more and more towards the highway of Rome; and when at last he maintained in the notorious "Tract XC," in 1841, that the thirty-nine articles — that corner stone of the English Church — "were not opposed to Catholic teaching and only partially to Roman dogma, that the real opposition is merely to the dominant errors of Rome," the crisis was reached and his leadership was at an end. The Oxford Movement was dead, in 1845, with Newman's admission into the communion of Rome; but its consequences on English thought and English literature long continued. This is not the place in which to pursue a subject which belongs to a sphere much wider. Neither the pellucid prose of the author of the *Apologia* nor the unconscious sophistry of his dialectic and ingenious mind (call them "the severity of his logic," if that is preferred) is here our concern. Nor is it our business to question the sincerity of a man who paid much for the courage of his religious convictions, whatever were his rewards. The poetry of Keble, the better part of which was prior to the "movement," has already found mention in its place. Its simple churchliness and faint Wordsworthianism are little touched by religious or other turmoil or debate. Its uniform level of modest literary excellence explains its enormous popularity with the godly and the unpoetic. The present writer feels otherwise concerning the slender volume of Cardinal Newman's verse. For while little of it is poetry in any exalted or imaginative sense, there is in it the same fine feeling for the phrase, for thought buoyed up by language at once choice and fitting, that we find in Newman's incomparable prose. Newman's poetry has none of the religious conventionality of Keble's. His is the freer, nobler utterance of a heart equally sincere and of a writer immeasurably Keble's superior. "Lead, kindly Light," written as far back as 1833, and called by the author "The Pillar of the Cloud," is only the best among many beautiful devotional poems. "Hora Novissima," to name only one other lyric, should be contrasted with Matthew Arnold's poem, "A Wish," if we would know in its extremes how the Oxford Movement divided the hearts and hopes of men. If there is a fine nobility in the hard-eyed stoicism of agnostic courage, there is assuredly as touching a beauty in the devout submission of unquestioning faith to death assuaged by the consolations of Christian ministration.

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[1] See Hugh Walker in his *Victorian Literature,* 1910, pp. 111 ff.

Save for Newman and Keble, the Oxford Movement inspired no other poet of note. Strange that reactionary faith should have been so silent with rationalistic doubt soon to become so vocal: and this the more when we recognize that the heart of the reaction was, after all, æsthetic and a protest against the inroads of rationalism on hallowed if conventional ideals of life. The ninety *Tracts for the Times* offered a petty stop-gap to the onrushing tide of liberal thought. Essentially conservative and conventional Tennyson was wrought to the devising of a species of poetical *via media* wherein the theory of evolution and English orthodoxy were yoked uncomfortably to step the way of progress together. Browning, who is as conspicuous for his anti-ecclesiastical attitude as he is for his optimistic faith in God, set forth the strongest plea of modern times for a rationalized view of life, conduct, and human obligations, for the exercise of individual freedom and obedience to the divine promptings of rebellion where rebellion must inevitably arise against outworn conventions. But it was younger men who felt to the full the immediate reaction against the defeated "attempt to revive in the church of England the claims of primitive Christianity and bind her to traditions." Arthur Hugh Clough and Matthew Arnold have been variously called the poets of rationalism, of agnosticism, or of doubt. The latter are better terms than the first; for neither poet shared in the Berserker rage of Carlyle, that mighty breaker of images, but mourned over the fragments of the fallen idols, hesitant and nonplussed as to whether, after all, it were not better they had remained in their hallowed niches. It is this that makes the two poets of doubt so thoroughly representative of a salient characteristic of the century just completed. For if we look over that century at large, we find its spirit marked by several momentous changes. The contented acquiescence in things as they are, pervaded by a strong moral sense and love of man in society which characterized the eighteenth century, was disturbed by the awakening of the feeling for nature, by rebellion against convention, by romantic spirit, enthusiasm, in weaker natures sentimentalism and despair. This was followed by the hush that preceded the coming of Tennyson and Browning, during which Carlyle carried forward the earlier enthusiasm, now turned sceptical and iconoclastic, into the broader transcendentalism represented by Emerson in philosophy, George Eliot in fiction, and Ruskin in art. Meanwhile the rationalistic note was sounding ever more and more insistently, the effect of the spirit of scientific inquiry that produced such men as Darwin, Huxley, Mill, and Tyndall; and this in turn brought about the reactionary Oxford Movement of which we have just heard; and in the war of contending tendencies wrought such men as Newman, Kingsley, Dr. Thomas Arnold, Maurice, and in a still younger generation, Clough and Matthew Arnold. If the spirit of our own late time, the age of Victoria, be studied for the larger inherent qualities that made it what it was, we must recognize inevitably among them its intellectuality, its separation of the man from his opinions, its doubt, and its faith. This new faith is one that is larger than that of creeds and dogmas; it is faith in the salvation that is to come to mankind in unswerving fidelity to truth. Victorian doubt, too, was not so much unbelief as half-belief, question, pause, lest we be led blindly on and trust to guidance where there is none. Least of all is the doubt of men like Clough and Arnold to be interpreted into that cheap scepticism that wraps itself in the cloak of its own cleverness and questions both motive and evidence because it knows that all is not true within. Keble used to say of Dr. Thomas Arnold, the poet's father, that it was "better to have Arnold's doubts than another man's certainties"; and Tennyson's well-known lines about more faith in honest doubt than in half the creeds echoes the same thought.

Arthur Hugh Clough was born in 1819, three years before Arnold. Both were educated at Rugby under the powerful personality of Dr. Thomas Arnold, who has been described as the exponent of liberalism, moral and intellectual, a man who left a deeper impression on his time through his pupils than almost any teacher. Dr. Arnold was always a force counter to the Oxford Movement; and his appointment, in 1842, to the Regius professorship of history at Oxford marked the definite defeat of the reactionaries. Thus in their studentship the two young poets were caught in the vortex, so to speak, of these conflicting waves of opinion. It was more than the liberality of Dr. Arnold (or the looseness of his opinions to him who will have it so) that unsettled such minds. It required likewise the recoil that came with the contemplation of what must have seemed most vividly to such men a return to the empty formalism of a justly forgotten past. This it was that made these two poets so supereminently representative of this central struggle of the age. If Arnold represents the intellectual side of these times of doubt and debate, Clough represents their emotional features. Clough was less self-centred, less eager to do battle, more puzzled as to which way to advance, though none the less unshaken in his belief in the final conquest of truth. Yet it was Clough who sacrificed his fellowship, and with it all that he loved at Oxford, to Carlyle's appeal that we admit no insincerities into our lives. Equally characteristic of Clough was it that he should subsequently have exclaimed: "Carlyle led us out into the wilderness and left us there."

Neither Clough nor Arnold distinguished himself at college, though each later attained a fellowship. The several minor educational posts that Clough held and Arnold's inspectorship of schools, in which he spent his life, seem sufficiently incongruous occupations for men of such temper. But these things, however faithfully performed, were the avocations of their lives; literature was their vocation. The earliest of Clough's volumes, *The Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich*, bears date 1848, though he had written earlier poetry than this. Arnold followed with the publication of *The Strayed Reveller and Other Poems* in the next year. He, too, had begun earlier with prizes for verse at Rugby and Oxford; and he gave over the writing of poetry about 1870 to become the most consummate and finished literary critic of his age. Clough died prematurely in 1861, his work uncompleted;

Arnold lived on to 1888, professor of poetry for ten years at Oxford, and exerting a powerful influence that has not yet failed by his sound and brilliant literary and other criticism.

The poetry of Clough is more distinctively individual, more fully the expression of the poet's inner self than that of any other poet easily to be named since Wordsworth. Clough is passionate, never mystical, direct and even practical at times; his thought is often concentrated, and sometimes it clogs and impedes its own solution from his very fullness of utterance. He is not a master of conventional poetical form like Arnold; music, metres, and the gauds and ornaments of verse are nothing to him save where such things must enter vitally into the poetic thought. He chose the dactylic hexameter — a most un-English measure — for two of his longer poems, and he managed it in a rambling and uneven manner, though it must be confessed not without a certain congruency with his uneven, rambling subject-matter. In full recognition of the merits of these longer poems and the more ambitious *Dipsychus*, a problematically successful adaptation of the Faust-motif to our own late times, Clough seems to the present writer happier in his shorter lyrical poems, where he obtains a concentration and a semblance of unity not his elsewhere. In lyrics such as the ever-popular "Qua Cursum Ventus," "The Hidden Love," "Say not the struggle naught availeth," we have the thoughtful, ruminating spirit fraught with spiritual feeling that declares Clough a Wordsworthian indeed, but with a distinctive originality of his own. There are few poems, for example, more significant of their author and of the spirit of his time than the lines entitled "The Music of the World and of the Soul," beginning:

Why should I say I see the things I see not?
Why be and be not?
Show love for that I love not, and fear for what I fear not?
And dance about to music that I hear not?
Who standeth still i' the street
Shall be hustled and justled about;
And he that stops i' the dance shall be spurned by the dancers' feet.

. . . .

Are there not, then, two musics unto men? —
One loud and bold and coarse,
And overpowering still perforce
All tone and tune beside;

. . . .

The other, soft and low,
Stealing whence we not know,
Painfully heard, and easily forgot,
With pauses oft and many a silence strange
(And silent oft it seems, when silent it is not).

. . . .

But listen, listen, listen, — if haply be heard it may;
Listen, listen, listen, — is it not sounding now?

The poetry of Matthew Arnold was the work of his youth, as we have seen. *Thyrsis*, his beautiful elegiac tribute to his dead friend, Clough, appeared in 1866, five years after the latter's death; and in the following year, Arnold published the last of his several volumes of poetry. Except for the noble drama, *Empedocles*, though it has practically no motion, and a small group of narrative pieces, conspicuous among them the blank-verse poems, "Sohrab and Rustum" and "Balder Dead," an elegiac character pervades all that Arnold has written in verse. And the early poems which contained a group of fine sonnets, "The Forsaken Merman," "Resignation," "Youth's Agitation," and "The Gipsy Child," struck the note and determined the range of the poet's art which he was scarcely to amplify in his later work. With *Empedocles*, in 1852, appeared the two series of lyrics later known under the titles, "Switzerland," and "Faded Leaves"; and here fall "Dover Beach," "A Summer Night," "A Wish," and many another lyric — for they are truly such — wherein speaks the stoical regret of the poetry of doubt. More elaborately elegiac are the touching and eloquent poems "Rugby Chapel," "The Scholar Gipsy," once more reminiscent of Clough, "Heine's Grave," the "Stanzas from the Grand Chartreuse," and those to the memory of "Obermann."

The poetry of Arnold marks not only a revolt against mediævalism in religion and thought but also a revulsion against that decorative mediævalism in poetry and art that, beginning among the earlier romanticists, ruled variously in the poetry of Keats, Tennyson, and the authors constituting what was later known as the pre-Raphaelite school. Rationalistic and even agnostic as Arnold was in his attitude towards established religion, his artistic faith went back to the ancients, finding in their calm and certain art that "consolation and stay" denied the conscientious artist amid the babel, the indecision, and the bizarre distortions of modern art. Arnold thus became, in his theories about literature as in his practice of poetry and prose, the exponent of classicism and classic ideals; although, as to immediate English poetic influences upon him, he, like Clough, was one of the latest of the disciples of the Wordsworthian cult of nature and did not wholly escape that subjective revealment which is characteristic of our modern time. There is, in consequence of his classicism of ideal, however, a restraint about Arnold's poetry, a fastidiousness that is unlike any other English poet of notable rank unless we go back to Thomas Gray. Arnold's finish is only exceeded by that of Tennyson himself, and his taste was even more rigorous and exacting. The characteristics, in a word, of Arnold's poetry are its atmosphere of culture, its spiritual freedom, and its classical restraint. He shrank from the display of subjective feeling, however he may have fallen into it at times, and found something essentially vulgar in poetical or other wearing of one's heart on one's sleeve. Byronism, Wertherism, with the whole sentimental school, were abhorrent to him as the tinsel and barbaric jewelry of inferior romantic art; and his style, his diction, and his verse are chaste and simple as his thought is habitually noble and self-poised. Arnold at his best is always natural, pure, dignified, and strong. He has the classic repose and sense of design; he possesses the classical clearness and stoical temper. And if he be wanting in passion of the heart (as his "Tristram and Iseult" sufficiently attests), he has abundantly that elegiac passion of the mind, that troubled doubt of self, of the world, of heaven itself, that distinguished the thinking men of his time. This it is that gives to the poetry of Arnold a quality of enduring interest above the possibilities of mere art for art's sake or mere ethical and religious impressionism however fervid and exalted.

Romanticism has been, now for more than a century, a word to conjure with, vague and undefined as its bounds remain. And it is obvious that within this ample limbo of ideas many diverse things are readily comprehended. The poetry of Scott, even that of Byron, was often picturesque and sentimental; it was likewise rhetorical and superficial from an imperfect sympathy at times with the subject in hand or for other reasons. In a word, in its earlier manifestations, the romantic impulse in England had not shaken itself free from the conventional spirit of the previous age. It was but a half-revolt; the absolute rebels were Shelley and Keats, and the way had been pointed them by Coleridge. Theirs was a finer spirit, more eager was their pursuit of abstract beauty. Their poetry was sensuous rather than sentimental, impatient of restraint, intensely subjective and yet objectively minute in its expression of detail. Above all, it is characterized by a high seriousness that is as distant from the flippancy of Byron as it is distinguishable from the didactic gravity of Wordsworth. This newer and choicer romanticism was the basis of the Tennysonian art, however the laureate conventionalized it. It was likewise the stock, with Keats as the intermediary, out of which sprang the poetry of the group known as the pre-Raphaelite writers together with much that has come after.

The term pre-Raphaelite is unhappy, however employed. It was the self-assumed designation of the little brotherhood of painters that formed about Holman Hunt, John Millais, and Dante Gabriel Rossetti in protest against the cult of Raphael that marked the academic painters of the forties; and it was employed to designate their art and that of many others who were thought in some wise to resemble them. The term was also transferred to literature owing chiefly to Rossetti's distinction in poetry, and has been extended to include William Morris and Algernon Charles Swinburne, not here to mention many lesser names. The late Mr. William Sharp, earliest chronicler of the cult and late follower in its wake, finds "between the works of the band of artists who preceded Raphael and those who were called after them in the nineteenth century . . . no real resemblance; the only bond that united them being that of going directly to nature for inspiration and guide."[1] Certain it is that the brotherhood made a compact "to adopt a style of absolute independence as to art dogma and convention"; and that in so doing, where nature failed — as she seems not infrequently to have failed them — the brethren trusted, as Rossetti himself put it, each to his "own intelligence."[2] A certain definition of outline and richness of color has been posited, too, for the pre-Raphaelite painters, qualities transferable and distinguishable in pre-Raphaelite poetry as well. This art possesses undeniable originality, but it is less that compassed by an unaffected return to nature than the strangeness and other-worldliness that results from a deliberate recurrence to mediæval models and a reincarnation, so to speak, of mediæval ideals. In a word, the pre-Raphaelite poetry and art was a reactionary movement, a return to an older artistic tradition, leveled as much, so far as it was militant, against the rationalizing spirit of our time as against contemporary artistic creeds. How this paralleled the return to a mediæval ritual which the Oxford movement induced must be patent to the most superficial observer.

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[1] *Dante Gabriel Rossetti, a Record and a Study,* 1883.

[2] E. L. Cary, *The Rossettis,* 1900, p. 33.

Dante Gabriel Rossetti was the heart, soul, and flower of the "movement"; the rest are pre-Raphaelite only in so far as they partake of his spirit or share in the qualities that were his. The son of a poet and a patriot, banished his native Italy as a rebel against tyranny, young Rossetti early showed his blood in his precocious artistic talent and his impatience with the restraints of the artist's education of his time. The formation of the brotherhood, the publication of that now precious little journal of protest, *The Germ*, in 1850, the criticism and attack of it and the noble and generous defense of the new ideals by Ruskin — all these things we know, told in a hundred different ways.[1] Later came the acquaintance with the Oxford circle, in which William Morris and Swinburne with their *Oxford*

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[1] See especially the Introduction to a new edition of *The Germ* by William Michael Rossetti, 1901.

and Cambridge Magazine, 1857, had headed for literature a similar revolt; then the tragic death of Rossetti's wife, that deepened his art and his melancholy, sinking him, towards the close of the twenty years yet left him, into a wreck of his former self, morbid, fitful, passionate, and irresponsible.

Rossetti is the most purely lyrical of the poets of his group and the most untrammelled by rule or precedent. His pictures we are told were painted with much labor and toil in an incessant struggle for perfection; his poems came with a far greater spontaneity, from the famous "Blessed Damosel," written, it is said, when the poet was but eighteen, to the many ballads, all of them fraught with lyrical feeling and a strange rare quality of poetic description, and to the passionate, exquisitely wrought sequence of sonnets, *The House of Life*. Rossetti is made up in his poetry of several apparently contradictory elements. His realism (though seldom the realism of nature) is of the most uncompromising type and distinguished by a certain rigidity, not to call it severity. On the other hand, his ideality carries him into the most visionary of themes, betraying itself in spirituality and even mysticism. Mr. Pater has compared Rossetti to his namesake Dante, discovering in him the same "definition of outline," the same "care for minute and definite imagery," and a like intensely concrete power of poetic particularization. After enumerating two distinct functions of poetry, the revealing to every eye "the ideal aspects of common things" and "the imaginative creation of things that are ideal from their very birth," the critic concludes: "Rossetti did something excellent of the former kind; but his characteristic, his really revealing work, lay in adding to poetry a fresh poetic material of a new order of phenomena in the creation of a new ideal."[1] That this ideal was wholly a healthy one has been questioned again and again. Buchanan's notoriously unlucky attack on Rossetti's poetry as "fleshly," retracted, as it was, fully and nobly, if almost too late, may be dismissed with the regret that it still affects critical estimates of the greatest of the pre-Raphaelites.[2] There is, however, none the less, an excess of feeling over governing thought in Rossetti's poetry, a materialism at times almost gross, in the passionate symbolism which the poet employs to figure forth the surging tide of the lover's emotion (in *The House of Life*, for example), that can be paralleled only in the similar sensuous imagery which mars, to a chaster northern taste, the adoration of certain Romanist poets in their poetic cult of the Virgin.[3] Notwithstanding, if we except Shakespeare, there is no such sequence of sonnets as Rossetti's *House of Life*, with their choice, rich diction, their weight of fervid passion, and their perfect poetic execution. Wordsworth, Keats, and others achieve distinction in individual sonnets; there is no other collection of modern times sustained at so high and so impassioned a poetic level. However intellectuality must be denied to Rossetti, and however far he is from the poetry of purpose that bids fair to relegate the divine art to the place of an humble handmaiden of "sociology," we may agree with Mr. Watts-Dunton that the poetry of Rossetti is charged with "an ever-present apprehension of the spiritual world and of the struggle of the soul with earthly conditions." [1] It is this, with his aloofness from contemporary interests, his poetic intensity, his rigid sense of form, and his quaint romantic spirit — a spirit never grotesque, however — that makes Rossetti in the fullest sense the poet of the mediæval reaction.

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[1] See the essay prefixed to the selections from Rossetti in Ward's *English Poets*, IV, 633.

[2] "The Fleshly School of Poetry" was published as "by Thomas Maitland," in the *Contemporary Review*, October, 1871. See *A Look Round Literature*, 1877, for a complete recantation, and the noble "Lines to an Old Enemy."

[3] See the poetry of Crashaw and the volumes *Carmina Mariana*, ed. O. Shipley, three vols., 1894, 1902, *passim*.

Nor are these latter qualities, though their mode of expression is different, in any degree wanting in the poetry of Rossetti's gifted sister Christina Rossetti. Two years Dante's junior, as definitely and passionately a lover of art as her brother, she was even more precocious, and had published verses before those of hers that appeared in *The Germ*. If earthly love, the quintessence of human passion, rules the poetry of Dante Rossetti, it is heavenly love, wherein is the renunciation of the world, that fine asceticism to which the mediæval Italian temper was likewise equal, that is the heart and soul of the beautiful poetry of Christina Rossetti. Whether her poems be denominated sacred or secular, the spirit that looks out beyond the grave, that annihilates time and space, that broods much on life and death, interpenetrating the thought of one with the other — this is the spirit that rules her. It is the spirit of "We buried her among the flowers," "When I am dead, my dearest," and "Too late for love, too late for joy," exquisite lyrics that only an exquisite taste could redeem from gloom and morbidity. It has been well said that Christina Rossetti alone among the important poets of the reign carried in her "the fullness of faith." Hers was not a faith like Cardinal Newman's, the result of a derationalizing process that fought its way back against the current of the age to an impregnable mediæval stronghold; nor yet that of Browning, optimistic, unreasoning, ingrained, and half a matter of inheritance. Christina Rossetti's faith — and faith is the best part of her poetry — like the overtones of a vibrated string, adjusts all thoughts to the love of God. It is this together with the sincerity and purity of her art that keeps her from the morbid, the grotesque, and the despairing.

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[1] See on the whole topic T. Watts-Dunton's well-known essay on Rossetti in the *Encyclopædia Britannica.*

The only other actual member of the pre-Raphaelite brotherhood, deserving of memory for this association, if not quite for his poetry, is Thomas Woolner, the painter. William Bell Scott, already mentioned, and Sir J. Noel Paton group here less for the circumstance of any real association with Rossetti and his circle than for the fortuitous accident that both likewise combined the arts of poetry and painting. There is a metrical freedom about the verse of Paton, and he has left at least one lyrical success in the beautiful song beginning, "There is a wail in the wind to-night." Unconnected with pre-Raphaelitism though contemporary with its earlier course, is the poetry of Sidney Dobell, already mentioned for his war songs, and that of Alexander Smith, gibbeted together in a merciless review of Aytoun's as the poets of "the spasmodic school." The likeness of these poets lies in their faults, and of these inequality is the chief. Dobell seems neither to have known when to stop nor how to reject; and yet there is much of the poet in him. He burns at times with a genuine martial spirit in *England in Time of War*, 1856, a spirit not shared by Smith, who had collaborated with him in *Sonnets of the War*, in the previous year. The lyrical "Ballad of Keith of Ravelston," Dobell's best known poem, deserves its popularity, and there are other poems, "Return," and the fanciful "A Chanted Calendar," for example, that leave him a place, though humbler, it may be surmised, than he would have claimed for himself among the mid-Victorian lyrists. It has been said that if Dobell, with his ready emotions, was a belated devotee of Byronism, Alexander Smith, Scotchman though he was, found his inspiration in Keats. Smith's poetry is contained in three volumes, published between 1853 and 1861. Like Dobell, he was enthusiastically received, only to fall upon a later neglect. His *City Poems*, in which Glasgow is his inspiration, offer many illustrations of his power of "description touched with high imagination," and the lyric, "Barbara," if somewhat strained and wordy in parts, is sustained by a genuine poetic fervor.

In William Morris, poet, painter, designer in art, printer and socialist, we meet with one of the most engaging and interesting personages of Victorian times. Morris was artistic activity incarnate, and to plan with him was to attempt instant execution, moulding ways and means into subjection to the idea which was often realized with a degree of approximation miraculous to a less practical and precipitate nature. Morris was fortunate in a childhood surrounded with the comfort, protection, and liberality that makes the expansion of a man's real nature possible. From the first the spirit of mediæval romance ruled in him, touching him not only as it touched some others at a single point, but in archæology, architecture, painting, poetry, everywhere it may be surmised except in religion; for it has been well said that "it was the religion of beauty rather than the beauty of any one religion or creed that appealed to him."[1] With a nature open to all such impressions, Morris fell in with the "Tennysonian enthusiasm" that was ruling in the Oxford of his day, with Ruskin and his writings, and with the pre-Raphaelite brotherhood. In 1856, Morris and his friends founded *The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*, destined to run for a year, and turned first artist and then poet. It was two years later that *The Defence of Guinevere* was published. This remarkable volume is out-and-out pre-Raphaelite, and in it appeared that part of the poetry of Morris that most nearly approaches the lyrical. The long and interesting later career of Morris, his stupendous labors and admirable success in translation and epic poetry, the revolution that he effected in the popular applications of decorative art, his fervent socialism, prose writings and lecturings on that and on other topics — none of these concern us. We have just called *The Defence of Guinevere* out-and-out pre-Raphaelite; it was such in its picturesque mediævalism, in its height of simple coloring, and in the large part that a certain vivid and naïve description bears to the whole. But even aside from its title and its "doings with the affairs of King Arthur," there is in this volume a reflex of the prevalent influence of a certain very definite part of Tennyson's poetry. In "Oriana," in "The Lady of Shalott" even, more especially in the dramatic lyric, "The Two Sisters," we recognize so distinctively what we have come to call the pre-Raphaelite note that we are surprised to find these poems in Tennyson's volume of 1842 with the "Morte d'Arthur," and "Sir Galahad," remembering that *The Idylls of the King* were not complete (barring "Balin and Balan") until the year 1869. This is the Tennyson that affected Morris; of the larger elegiac, classical, political, patriotic, and realistic Tennyson, Morris shows, neither here nor elsewhere, a trace; and he developed the wide sweep and incessant onward progress of the stories of *The Earthly Paradise*, as he caught the noble spirit of Norse legend, elsewhere. The poems of *The Defence of Guinevere* are none of them strictly lyrics, for each is based on a story or situation in which both narrative and description are involved: "Shameful Death" for example, how a knight was treacherously slain, with his brother's vengeance, told by that brother years after the deed; "The Sailing of the Sword," how a lover sailed, only to return recreant with "a tall white maid" on his knee. And yet here again, in view of the unity, the music, and the single emotion which animates such poems and the concentration of this last, not its representation in the shift and change of action, we have a lyrical rather than a dramatically pervasive spirit. The success of such poems consists in their power to suggest by a flash of description here, a touch of narrative there, always by way of some picturesque detail, a picture suffused with a strong though objective emotion, usually in reminiscence of an event afar off. This is impressionist poetry, and like all impressionist art, in danger of vagueness and a lack of definition and significance. To explain this by reference to some deep spiritual symbolism, as has been done, is to obscure the understanding. Morris's poetry is as beautifully and fittingly decorative as his wall-paper, and as little suffused with mystery. He has instilled into a fanciful mediæval milieu, as unreal as that of Tennyson, suggestions of heroic human passions, more vivid than Tennyson's and more briefly conveyed, but in no wise more actual. The later poetry of Morris yields a few poems more lyrical in the accepted sense. None of these are more charming than the intercalary "months" of *The Earthly Paradise* with their fine sense for nature, or the amœbæan love song beginning, "In the white-flowered hawthorn brake," in "Ogier the Dane," in the same work. Morris might have attained the concentration of the lyric in its narrowest sense. He could do nearly anything that he attempted. As it is, his real joy was in the boundless reaches of epic song.

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[1] A. Noyes, in *William Morris, English Men of Letters*, 1908, p. 15.

It was in 1857 that Algernon Charles Swinburne came up to Oxford from Eton to fall into immediate association with the Oxonian pre-Raphaelites and to be stirred equally with them by the powerful influence and example of Rossetti. The eldest son of an admiral, of ancient and honorable stock, young Swinburne failed of his degree at Oxford, although he seems early to have acquired an extraordinary facility in foreign languages, French and Italian as well as Latin and Greek. Indeed, no English poet has so grasped and appreciated the literary, especially the poetic, achievements of other men native and foreign, modern and ancient; and none has ever so employed that knowledge in widening the range of his own poetic powers. Verses in Latin, Greek, in modern French and the language of old Provence, all flowed with equal readiness from his facile pen; and eloquently worded criticism in prose, albeit largely impressionistic and intuitive, was as much his birthright as his surprising mastery over the music, the imagery, and the multiple forms of lyrical and other measures. Of the mode of Swinburne's life we know very little; his recent death, in 1909, at the age of seventy-two, still leaves him one of the least personally known of our contemporary poets. His works exhibit an extraordinary capacity for friendship; or, at least, for a generous appreciation of the qualities of greatness among his contemporaries. In his early youth he visited Landor in Italy; and that venerable poet, Victor Hugo, and Mazzini (to mention no others) remained among his adorations, loved scarcely on this side of idolatry. Indeed, the essence of Swinburne's nature was enthusiasm. His was the last triumphant burst of Shelleian revolutionary song, glorious, impassioned, impracticable, never-ending song. He is superb in vituperation, in panegyric often sublime.

A list of the volumes of Swinburne would almost match that of Tennyson; even though we leave out the prose, his two or three narrative poems, and his half dozen dramas, the body of his poetry which is purely lyrical is to be found in nearly a dozen volumes. Omitting his earlier work, it was in *Atalanta in Calydon*, 1865, a tragedy after the Greek manner, that Swinburne first burst into fame. Despite his many subsequent triumphs over the complexities of an elaborate lyrical technique, the poet never surpassed the music and the poetic beauty of the famous choruses of this drama which remains the best known of his works. In the next year appeared the first series of *Poems and Ballads*, a volume as unparalleled for the exuberance and inventiveness of its lyrical effects as it is frank in its dithyrambic expression of erotic passion. Whatever may have been the poet's early touch with pre-Raphaelitism, here he had cut loose once and for all from precedent and example. Here was a poet whose technique was a revelation, in comparison to whose absolute sway over verse Tennyson's perfections seemed tame and studied, one the impetuosity and torrent of whose passionate imagery, like the ocean in the agitation of storm, left the raptures of Shelley cold as the shimmer of moonbeams on still water. It is deplorable that to the many, among them genuine lovers of poetry, Swinburne has been too often finally appraised by this one remarkable volume, often reprinted (in America at least) with a catch title derived from one of the most characteristic, as it is one of the most beautiful if vividly erotic, poems of the book. There is infinitely more than this in Swinburne; and even in his frankest and most daring moments, he is, neither here nor elsewhere, decadent. The often hazardous enthusiasm which Swinburne lavishes on the love of man for woman, he bestows in other poems with equal warmth on his poetical ideals, on the heroes of his personal worship, on nature, and on the themes of his prose criticism. In *Songs before Sunrise*, 1871, and *Songs of Two Nations*, 1875, two volumes of splendid and imperishable poetry, we have the highest expression of Swinburne's political faith and creed. Always an avowed republican, he was really less the upholder of any one form of government than a natural rebel against all schemes of constituted authority. It was this that gave emphasis to his fulminations against kingcraft. It accounts, too, for his onslaughts on constituted religion and for that religion of Fate that holds the unfathomable background of his intermittent passages between paganism and an outright negation of God. Having declared that "man's soul is man's God still," hung like the guiding light of a ship at the mast's head, he continues,

Save his own soul's light overhead,
None leads him, and none ever led,
  Across earth's hidden harbor-bar,
  Past youth where shoreward shallows are,
Through age that drives on toward the red
  Vast void of sunset hailed from far,
To the equal waters of the dead;
  Save his own soul he has no star,
And sinks, except his own soul guide,
Helmless in middle turn of tide.

These are not the idle words of a thoughtless singer of love-lays, and no one can read them, the bitter invectives of such poems as "The Watch in the Night" and "Before a Crucifix," or the eloquence, ideality, and aspiration of "Hertha," of the "Marching Song" (to mention only these at random), and remain of any such opinion. Means and detail were as little to Swinburne as they ever were to Shelley; the political ideal comprehended in the one vague, glorious word "freedom" burned in each with a steady flame, and armed each with a scourge of scorpions for all that is base, ignoble, tyrannical, and inimical to the innate manhood of man.

With the second series of *Poems and Ballads*, 1878, the enthusiasm of Swinburne takes on not so much a new phase as a deeper and more fervent appreciation of the beauty, the mystery, the overmastering influence of nature. In poems such as "The Forsaken Garden," "A Wasted Vigil," "Neaptide," "On the Cliffs" (in the next volume, *Songs of the Springtides*, 1880), Swinburne takes his place among the great English lyrists of nature. And his preoccupation is with the deeper ground tones that strike wonder, terror, and worship into the primitive mythologizing mind. As Mr. Woodberry has put it in a passage, the whole of which should be read and pondered, "Fire, air, earth, and water are the four elements from which his very vocabulary seems made up; flame, wind, and foam, and all the forms of light are so much a part of his color-rhythm that they become an opaline of verse peculiarly his own. . . . The blurring effect of this mass of indefinable sensation, especially when metaphorically employed, even more than the overcharge of vocal sound in the verse, accounts for that impression of vacuity of meaning that Swinburne's poetry in general makes on readers not habituated to his manner."[1] Swinburne's is the crown of English poetry of the sea. To him the sea is "the nature-symbol of England" as of liberty, of hope, and of the life of mankind, and his splendid tumultuous lines, with their incessant dance, sparkle, and break into foam, seem the very incarnation in poetry of the spirit of the wide ocean. One other lyrical enthusiasm of Swinburne remains to be chronicled, his love and delicate understanding of childhood. There are no more beautiful poems in the language than the thirty odd lyrics entitled "The Dark Month," and the accompanying poems, "A Child's Pity," "Comparisons," and the rest that appear in the volume entitled *Tristram of Lyonesse.* There is about them a greater smoothness, a purer serenity, a more artistic restraint than is the great poet's elsewhere.

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[1] G. E. Woodberry, *Swinburne, Contemporary Men of Letters*, New York, 1905, p. 84.

Still, rather than one of these let us quote, however well known, a distinctively Swinburnian lyric, one of the few in which the poet has restricted himself, unless compelled by the limitations of an exotic verse-form, to the limits of three stanzas. We omit the second.

For a day and a night love sang to us, played with us,
  Folded us round from the dark and the light;
And our hearts were fulfilled of the music he made with us,
Made with our hearts and our lips while he stayed with us,
  Stayed in mid passage his pinions from flight
      For a day and a night.

. . . .

But his wings will not rest and his feet will not stay for us:
  Morning is here in the joy of its might;
With his breath he has sweetened a night and a day for us:
Now let him pass, and the myrtles make way for us;
  Love can but last in us here at his height
      For a day and a night.

The marvellous virtuosity of Swinburne as a lyrist has long been a matter of universal recognition, his mastery over metre, language, imagery, each in its perfection. Much, too, has been written of his "dangerous facility" in verse, of his inexhaustible wealth of figure and symbol, and of that extraordinary power that can bear off lyrical emotion on steadily onward-rushing pinions in flights that put to the test — and often disgrace — the most consummate readers of poetry. Condensation and organized brevity were not among the poetical gifts of Swinburne; yet he has triumphed again and again in the sonnet and in the still more restricted limits of the rondel.[1] But to deny informing significance to this various, copious, vital, and opalescent poetry is to misunderstand the poet's large, passionate, and elemental nature. There is the poetry of thought, and there is the poetry of feeling. The first we admire for its craftsmanship, for its hammered perfection, wrought out on the anvil of the mind, and we think it deep and important because we recognize the effort expended upon it. The poetry of feeling, however artistic in its expression, is not wrought out, but born as men are born, the living organic offspring of the parent, reproducing his features, his nature; and it is inevitably what it is. Such, although it contain neither name, date, nor concrete happening, is the most autobiographical of all poetry; for it reflects the very soul of the poet, and being the most autobiographical, it is likewise the most essentially lyrical. We may think ourselves into the semblance of what we are not; the expression of emotion, of the passion that sways and the enthusiasm that leads, cannot falsify nature. The lyrical poetry of Swinburne is in a sense more essential poetry than the poetry of Tennyson, Browning, or Matthew Arnold, because it is less sophisticated with the intellectual processes — be they artistic restraint, eccentric learning, or agnostic ratiocination — because it is more undividedly the expression of the elemental emotions.

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[1] Cf. *A Century of Roundels*, 1883; and especially the *Sonnets on the Dramatists*.

There remain a few lesser poets who are generally reputed to have shared in the pre-Raphaelite influences of the time, either directly or indirectly. Among them are Richard Watson Dixon, the friend of Morris, but unlike him in both the restraint and the slender volume of his poetry, and Lord de Tabley, who, writing under several pseudonyms, reflected in his skilful verse the influences besides of many masters. More truly followers of Rossetti and Swinburne were Arthur O'Shaughnessy and the blind Philip Burke Marston. And to these may be added the name of Roden Noel and the accomplished critic, Frederick Myers. Of these only O'Shaughnessy and Noel find representation in the *Oxford Book of Verse.* Noel should live, if for no more, for the sad little lyric, "They are waiting on the shore"; O'Shaughnessy, who had the lyrist's music in his veins, for the late pre-Raphaelite blossom, "I made another garden, yea." The general influence of Rossetti on succeeding English poets has been immense, even although the name of pre-Raphaelite is to be denied to many who came under his spell. Rossetti is the main conduit of the influence of Keats to later Victorians. Thus William Sharp, whose somewhat thin earlier poetry was directly inspired by his devotion to the dying Rossetti, lived to join, in his later "other self, Fiona Macleod," the Celtic revival that still remains a notable feature of our immediate contemporary times. The affiliations of the late Oscar Wilde, outside of his plays and his fiction, point inevitably to the æsthetic movement of which the prose writings and theorizings of Ruskin, the poetry of the pre-Raphaelites, and the practical and socialistic applications of William Morris were all parts. Neither the preposterous egotism and pose of the man, the brilliant persiflage of his conversation and dramatic dialogue, nor the appalling tragedy of his life can shut the eyes of ingenuous criticism to the fact that the place of Wilde, in the realm of pure poetry, is a notable and honorable one. Moreover, ingenious scrutiny will find little in his poetry, outside of the distortion of the motive in the story of *Salomé*, justly to be designated decadent. Warmth of imagination in the suggestion of sensuous images there is, somewhat more than in Keats, decidedly less than in the younger Swinburne or in certain narrative poems of Marlowe or Shakespeare. On the other hand, there are few nobler poems of its type than the address to England, "Ave Imperatrix," few more tender little threnodies than "Requiescat," addressed to his sister, nor many more touching portrayals of self than the "Apologia" and the sonnet, "Hélas!" It is in some of his sonnets — "Madonna Mia" or the "Vita Nuova" — and in his use of certain phrases of refrain that Wilde most nearly resembles his master Rossetti; his narrative poems, with their frequently happy observance of nature and their fine swing of continuousness overrunning the stanza, smack more of his other master Keats whom he adored. Lastly, it would be difficult to find in the language so poignant, despairing, so grim and artistically inevitable a lyrical cry as that of that terrible, wonderful poem wherein his own abasement, misery, and contrition for crime are universalized into permanent art, "The Ballad of Reading Gaol."

Among poets not yet named who began to write in the fifties, three demand mention. Mr. Alfred Austin succeeded Tennyson in 1902 as poet laureate of England; Mr. Austin's political opinions were less open to cavil than were those of Swinburne. The others are James Thomson, the poet of *The City of Dreadful Night*, and George Meredith, the famous novelist, last of the great Victorians to leave us. Thomson was the son of a sailor who became a paralytic. The boy was reared in poverty and educated at the Caledonian Asylum; thereafter he led an irregular life, passing through a number of positions as teacher in the army, various clerkships and secretaryships. In early youth he lost his betrothed, and ill luck, accentuated by intemperance, seems always to have attended him. He was an enthusiastic student of Shelley, and from him, with the help of the friend of his youth, Charles Bradlaugh, the avowed atheist, Thomson soon fell into the revolutionary and, what was worse, the pessimistic theories that embittered his life and pervaded his poetry. Though he published mainly after 1880, his poetry belongs to some twenty-five years of his life. Thomson died in 1882 "after four terrible weeks of intemperance, homelessness, and desperation,"[1] and his name has been associated once and for all with the poetry of pessimism and despair. Limpidity and unaffectedness of diction with a resigned fatalism, born of a clear sight of things as they are on those grey and solemn days when the heart forgets hope and the spring, such are among the notes of Thomson as he sings:

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[1] See H. S. Salt, *Life of Thomson* ("*B. V.*"), 1898, pp. 158 ff.

Weary of erring in this desert life,
  Weary of hoping hopes for ever vain,
Weary of struggling in all-sterile strife,
  Weary of thought which maketh nothing plain,
I close my eyes and calm my panting breath,
And pray to thee, O ever-quiet Death!
  To come and soothe away my bitter pain.

The strong shall strive, — may they be victors crowned;
  The wise still seek, — may they at length find truth;
The young still hope, — may purest love be found
  To make their age more glorious than their youth.
For me; my brain is weak, my heart is cold,
My hope and faith long dead; my life but bold
  In jest and laugh to parry hateful ruth.

In poems such as "To our Ladies of Death," of which these are the two opening stanzas, in the terrible "Insomnia," as in a score of beautiful lyrics, "A Requiem," "The fire that filled my heart of old," "Day," "Night," will be found a passionate sorrow which is never cynical, never degenerate, but always imaginatively beautiful and expressed with the certainty of touch, the unaffected mastery of style, which is the mark of great poetry. As a matter of fact there was a happier and more buoyant side to Thomson's nature, which appears, too, in his poetry, if only sporadically. Characteristic of this happier mood is the "idyl" as he called it, "Sunday at Hampstead," which he offers as "a very humble member of the great and noble London mob," but in which he has transfigured the ordinary experiences of a holiday outing by suburban train and on the common with the touch and the sentiment of poetry.

The poetry of George Meredith began with a volume, published as early as 1851, when the poet was but twenty-three years of age; and some six other volumes followed, the last, *A Reading of Life*, in 1901. Meredith was thus precocious as a poet, but fiction soon absorbed him; and he was warmly welcomed by judicious criticism from the first, although the world only returned to his poetry when his place among the foremost of English novelists became unassailable. Deeply interesting in itself and for the suggestion of a possible autobiographical import in the case of a nature almost as reticent as Shakespeare's, is *Modern Love*, 1862, in which is told, in a series of sonnet-like poems (actually stanzas of sixteen lines), a tragic story of the estrangement of two souls, essentially noble but "ever diverse." As a tale of emotion, told not for the story but for the passion involved, *Modern Love* is justly comparable with the lyrical sonnet sequences. The theme has been described as "a noble spiritual agony, the last ordeal of that finely tempered clay that will not accept the senses, except on the terms of the spirit."[1] Doubtless it is all this to the exceptional reader who demands that poetry "bring him a romantic sense of esoteric possession." But to most others, despite many noble lines and incessant flashes of that keen insight that is so distinctively Meredith the novelist's, these poems seem overstrained, unnatural, and the emotion at times — dare we avow it? — ignoble. We turn to the author's wholesomer poetry with a sense of relief. Meredith is a lyrist of extraordinary originality and of high and serious achievement. As a young man he often wrote, as in that exquisite song "Angelic Love," so praised by Charles Kingsley, with a directness and musical simplicity widely at variance with his later involved and difficult style. To this simplicity he has often returned in his latest poetry. What could be more direct or more poetically significant, for example, than these lines entitled "Alternation" from *A Reading of Life?*

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[1] Le Gallienne, *Attitudes and Avowals*, 1910, p. 234.

Between the fountain and the rill
I passed, and saw the mighty will
To leap at sky; the careless run,
As earth would lead her little son.

Beneath them throbs an urgent will,
That here is play, and there is war.
I know not which had most to tell
Of whence we spring and what we are.

In Meredith rule with equal sway a subtly intellectualized feeling for nature, based on a remarkably detailed and sensitive observation of her ways, and a fine discrimination of the spiritual significance of such aspects of nature to man. Moreover, these things rule in Meredith as they have not ruled an English poet since Wordsworth. But there are many divergencies between these two; for Wordsworth's simple, homely, definite realism that sees the things that all men see but finds a meaning in them that only the poetical seer can discern, we have in Meredith a wealth and elaboration in detail that often overpowers and occasionally cloys of its own fullness. In that exquisite poem, for example, "Love in the Valley," it is not nature in any single aspect that warms the lover's lyrical rapture, but love transfiguring the aspects of all things, the spring, the winter, flower, bird, leaf, the very personal defects of the beloved, assuredly an observation no less true than the simple monotone of any ordinary love lyric, but one far less capable of treatment within the bounds of the artistic unity that lyrical poetry demands. In this poem, as in the glorious nature lyric, "The Woods of Westermain," and elsewhere, Meredith has triumphed as few have triumphed in the difficult art of the poetry of pure idea. Indeed, Meredith shares with Swinburne a power of sustained lyrical flight which is not always his reader's; as he shares with the same great lyrist a sensibility delicately attuned to the visible beauty and glory of external nature, together with a tendency, at times, to nebulous impressionism that leaves the mind certain as to the element of beauty, but dubious precisely as to its significance. These are some of the things that give to such a poem as "The Lark Ascending," with its exuberance of imagery, its unmatchable bubble of beautiful words, and its rhapsody of sound, its supreme place among Meredith's lyrics, and its position, hardly second to two such different, but equally perfect, poems as those of Hogg and Shelley addressed to the same poet-inspiring bird.

Among the poets whose song began in the sixties, Robert Buchanan demands a word here. Though born in England, Buchanan combined with a Scottish aggressiveness and confidence in opinion, a bellicosity of spirit that is usually associated with the less prudent temper of the Irish Celt. But Buchanan's was likewise a sense of fairness — some have called it inconsistency — that caused him to retract generously, as in the case of Rossetti, when once he knew himself in the wrong. Chronically an objector and defiantly independent, Buchanan was a singularly able and versatile man, writing facilely essays, criticism, fiction, drama and poetry, narrative, satirical and lyric. It may be surmised that Buchanan's animosities and attacks on friend and foe, with his self-confidence which was often overweening, had much to do with keeping his reputation, in poetry at least, below his actual merits during his life. He came up to London, a mere lad, in 1860, in the company of a talented young fellow-poet, David Gray, who died with more promise than fulfilment a year or so later; and Buchanan celebrated his memory in a model biography as well as in verse. As a poet, Buchanan began with classical subjects (*Undertones*, 1865), soon followed by *Idyls and Legends of Inverburn*, in which his dramatic power first manifested itself. But he soon found more congenial subjects in the dramatic and pathetic realism of his *London Poems*, 1866. Armed with the fierce indignation of the moralist rather than with the whip of the satirist, there is a virility and dramatic imaginativeness about such poems, for example, as "Nell," "Tiger Bay," or "The Dead Mother," that places them in their melodramatic category beside the poetic pathos of Hood and the inevitable prose fidelity of Crabbe.

In his later volumes Buchanan wrote more of the north country and much in narrative form; but in *The Book of Orm*, 1870, especially, he bore his part, true to his blood, in the Celtic revival, and displayed a mystic quality scarcely to have been suspected of so pronounced a realist. It is impossible here to follow this capable and versatile writer into the innumerable poetic efforts in which he reached perhaps only too often merely a qualified success. Buchanan is always honest, independent and belligerent; his humor is abundant and he sees straight morally, if not always artistically. His technique is ready and competent, it is rarely distinguished; not that he is careless so much as that his style lacks lift. It has been claimed for Buchanan that he is peculiarly representative of the later Victorian spirit. If so, it must be in his attitude of negation, sustained by an outspoken independence that makes him habitually the voice of the minority: at times of a minority of one. It is this that speaks in the interesting volume *The New Rome*, wherein he sings — for the spirit is throughout lyrical — against imperialism, chauvinism, and Mr. Kipling, against the materialism, banality, and wickedness of our lives, against our false and conventionalized God and philosophies of God, and against the cheerful *laissez faire* of the poet, who

> Happy and at home
> In all the arts and crafts of learned Rome,
> He sees the bloody pageant of despair,
> All Nature moaning 'neath its load of care,
> Takes off his hat, and with a bow polite
> Chirps, "God is in his heaven! The world's all right!"

All honor to the honest discontent with things as they are and the bold spirit that prompts the burning lines of poems like the "Carmen Deific," "The Lords of Bread," or the terrible "Sisters of Midnight." Neither the pre-Raphaelites and their followers with their cult of the eternal beautiful, much less the lighter virtuosi in poetry whose business it is, in Buchanan's own words, "to twang the lyre and strum the banjo, leaving politics to the thieves and thinking to the philosophers," are so representative, however they may share in the petty eddies of the current of the time. Buchanan was a man of large and varied utterance, keenly alive to the world in which he lived, sympathetic, moved by human suffering, too kind for a satirist, too agitated to attain to the creation of great poetry. It is singular how near the passionate indignation of Buchanan brings him at times to the political rhapsody of Swinburne. Compare, however, "The Songs of Empire" with "The Songs before Sunrise," and we can feel the difference between zealous and eminently successful eloquence and that inspiration and white glow of authentic poetry which the jealous gods of song grant only to him who is to the poetic manner born.

Indeed it is just this, the question of manner. As we look back at the poets of the Victorian age we find them easily divisible on the line of form, where difficulties arise as to more complex distinctions. To put it another way, we might divide all poets into the two great classes, those who approach their art by means of the level ways of truth and, secondly, those who search for the land of their heart's desire through winding lanes of beauty and enchanted vistas, at times along the hedges and trimly clipped parterres of beauty conventionalized by the all too careful hand of man. Not to pursue the figure, obviously the Brownings, Clough, Patmore, and Buchanan, with many more their inferiors, were more intent on the thing said than on the manner of saying it; precisely as Tennyson, Matthew Arnold, and the pre-Raphaelites were more governed by form and those conventions that raise poetry from a mere outlet for emotion into the practice of a delicate and subtly difficult fine art. Truth may be reached through beauty, and beauty by means of truth. In the higher regions where great poetry abides, the two are indissolubly united. On the lower slopes are many who have fallen short either from a neglect of the artistic or from a neglect of the significant.

Among the lyrical sisters — and they far outnumber the Muses — the sisters of song, of elegy, of the poetry of love or the poetry of nature, of joy, sorrow, and the rest, we have met again and again in this book the lightsome maid, *vers de société*, who is not quite so foreign in extraction as in name, nor altogether given over to triviality and flirtation. It was in 1873 that the first volume of Mr. Austin Dobson, *Vignettes in Rhyme*, appeared; and it has been followed by several like volumes of his dainty art in song, as it begot, in its more immediate time, a number of lesser followers and imitators. Mr. Dobson has learnt much from his predecessors from Prior to Praed and Calverley; and he has surpassed them all, at least, in his technical perfection and in the complete success with which he reproduces the setting and the atmosphere of the aristocratic society of the *ancien régime* and its counterpart — at least, as we imagine it — in eighteenth-century England. Ease, self-control, delicacy of touch, and perfection of finish, all are qualities of the poetry of Mr. Dobson. His wit is altogether sufficient, his humor well contained, and he reaches true pathos on occasion. Mockery and light burlesque, too, are his; but no coarseness and not a trace of pedantry or intrusion of the moralist's deadening purpose. The technical art of Mr. Dobson involves novelty, less the novelty that invents than the novelty that revives. It would be too much to say that he was the first to practise in English the intricate mediæval French verse forms — the *rondel*, *rondeau*, *villanelle*, *triolet*, and *ballade* — that so took the fancy of the poets and poetlings who were young in the seventies and early eighties. It was the pre-Raphaelites who did this; especially Rossetti, with his translation in the original *ballade* form of "*Des Dames du Temps Jadis*," and Swinburne, who published rondeaux as early as 1866. The late Mr. Andrew Lang, who so long ruled among us, a poet among critics, a critic among the poets, is also to be reckoned with in these early revivals of French forms, which he handled with the lightness and precision of an accomplished verseman. It is interesting to find Mr. Bridges writing rondeaux as early as Mr. Gosse, in 1873; and to have the latter claim for him the introduction of the triolet into English, as Mr. Gosse claims for himself the first English villanelle in the next year.[1] None the less, save for Swinburne's *tour de force, A Century of Roundels* (as he calls them), Mr. Dobson, more than any one, is responsible for the popularization in English of the forms just mentioned and for triumphs with the difficult *chant royal* as well. This is not the place in which to set forth the niceties of the construction of these delicate pieces of French *bric-à-brac.* They are pretty and pleasing, and now happily quite out of the poetic fashion. The late Mr. Henley often handled them in serious subjects with delicacy and address. It was not often, however, that they attained to the dignity of Mr. Dobson's *chant royal*, "The Dance of Death," or to the success of some of his renderings of Horace. Moreover, it is to be remembered that Mr. Dobson is far too good an artist to have adhered to these exotic forms of verse as the only medium for his exquisite art in trifles.

The death of Robert Louis Stevenson in 1894, well before that of his queen and his immediate fellows in literature, demands our mention of him here. Stevenson's was the engaging personality of the vagabond, a wanderer for health, a writer of various and unquestioned gifts, beloved and mistrusted, sincere and yet a poseur. His *Child's Garden of Verses*, 1885, stands alone in its perfect expression of the child's life from the child's point of view. His other poetry is, much of it, occasional; but in his later work, *Songs of Travel* (written between 1888 and 1894), the deepening shadows of his approaching and untimely death gave a greater depth and fervor to his facile and happy powers of expression in verse. Lucid, direct, and unset with mere poetic jewels, there is an unwonted charm about Stevenson's thought and his grace in the use of words that is not always found in more original and ambitious poetry.

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[1] See "A Plea for Certain Exotic Forms of Verse," *Cornhill Magazine*, xxxi, July, 1877, in which the technique of these French forms is explained. It is fair to Mr. Gosse to say that his graceful and significant poetry counts for far more than a happy imitation of the past.

More distinctive is the poetry of the late William Ernest Henley, friend and companion of Stevenson. Of the collected edition of Henley's poetry, first printed in 1898, five years before his death, the poet says: "Small as is this book of mine, it is all in the matter of verse that I have to show for the years between 1872 and 1897. A principal reason is that, after spending the better part of my life in the pursuit of poetry, I found myself (about 1877) so utterly unmarketable that I had to own myself beaten in art, and addict myself to journalism for the next ten years."[1] But ultimately "beaten in art" Henley was not, and his acceptance on his reappearance, in 1888, was instantaneous, and his repute has steadily increased. His work in poetry began with the extraordinary series of sketches in verse entitled *In Hospital*, born of his sojourn of nearly two years in the Old Edinburgh Infirmary. Here that "passionately observant imagination" of his has given us pictures the vividness, the truthfulness, the insight of which, each into its own human mood, must set at rest the notion that tunefulness is the sole criterion of lyrical poetry. Into the broader life of the metropolis Henley carried his large sane spirit and poignantly observing eye, reaching, in *London Voluntaries*, the height of this ruling feature of his art. But Henley, like all true poets, is at heart lyrical. His song is full and untremulous. Life, death, fate, and love are his among the immemorial themes: love as the strong man has known it, not the dreamer or the voluptuary; death as the brave man faces it, scorning the crutches of outworn faiths and the palliatives of narcotic romances. The song of Henley is always dauntless, manly, brave, and strong; he finds life bitter, and "fell" "the clutch of circumstance," but none the less he clearly sings:

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[1] "Advertisement," *Poems*, ed. 1904, p. vii.

> I am the master of my fate
> I am the captain of my soul.

Above such poems of steadfastness, above the grim "Madam Life 's a piece of bloom," and the many short direct lyrics of love, too charged with thought merely to sing, too burdened with passion to fall into epigram, I prefer the irregular musical phrases of "Margaritæ Sorori," quoted and praised by Stevenson:

> The smoke ascends
> In a rosy-and-golden haze. The spires
> Shine and are changed. In the valley
> Shadows rise. The lark sings on. The sun,
> Closing his benediction,
> Sinks, and the darkening air
> Thrills with a sense of the triumphing night —
> Night with her train of stars
> And her great gift of sleep.

So be my passing!
My task accomplished and the long day done,
My wages taken, and in my heart
Some late lark singing,
Let me be gathered to the quiet west,
The sundown splendid and serene,
Death.

The tuneful chorus of Victorian song continued to the end of the reign and beyond. As well deny the perennial songsters of the spring as affirm that poetry in the English tongue has not continued vocal since the age of reason went its unlamented way to death, and lyricism reawakened with Blake and Chatterton and Burns. The seventies ushered in many a new if lesser lyrist. Among the names which have not already found a mention in these pages are John Payne, happy translator of Villon, most difficult of the old poets of *la vie joyeuse;* strange original, rhapsodic Gerard Hopkins, hushing his song in the cloister and following, a generation too late, in the wake of the Oxford Movement; bedridden suffering Eugene Lee-Hamilton, writing strongly and fervidly in his *Imaginary Sonnets* and preserving in his own way not a little of the pictorial and dramatic power of his master Browning; Oliver Maddox Brown, son of the painter, extraordinarily precocious in art and literature, prose and verse, dying at little more than the age of Chatterton. The Wordsworthians, the religious poets, and the sonneteers, too, are still with us in their thousand tributary rills. "Frugal" has been the serious and adequate lyrical note of the eminent critic and Shakespearean scholar, Professor

Edward Dowden; while Mr. Samuel Waddington, besides his judicious collections alike of the *Sonnets of the Past* and the *Sonnets of the Present*, has added sonnets of his own to the most teeming of the garners of English lyrical verse.

And now this chapter of the Victorians, already too long, must be brought to a close. The lyrists of greater note who, beginning to sing in the latter years of the queen, are still with us and tuneful, those whose poetry marks the prolongation of influences still vital and working for the future, must claim attention in the following chapter. For the nonce we must keep in mind that the enumeration of influences and literary phenomena in their order as they arise, loses sight of much that existed side by side, interlaced and mutually affecting each the others. For example, Wordsworth was a laureate and a power in poetry during nearly twenty years of Tennyson's and Browning's activity. Tennyson succeeded, a monarch already strong in a popularity that lasted almost unbroken to his death; while on the other hand, Browning came into the recognition of Browning societies, to become a cult and an obsession, only in the eighties when pre-Raphaelitism had expanded from the intensity of Rossetti to the diffusion, narrative and lyrical, of Morris and Swinburne. Moreover there were grades and degrees in Victorian poetry to an extent not hitherto known in English literature. The people that read *The Household Philosophy* of Tupper constituted neither the audience of *The Light of Asia*, *The Epic of Hades*, nor that of

The Angel in the House, the last of these, be it noted, alone lyrical; and the age begot its "Tory poets," its lyrists of Chartism and Fenianism, its Catholic poets, as well as its poets of "spasm," aspiration, Protestantism and protest. But enough: assuredly Victoria's age has been one rich in lyrical poetry, one in which the lyric, too, has extended its sphere, its diversity of theme and treatment. That it has often been intellectualized into a something that gives us pause as to our definitions is not to be denied. That frequently it has been metamorphosed, too, into a richer, stranger romanticism than our literature had hitherto known, is likewise to be acknowledged. And yet the ground notes of this lyrical chorus, with all its new capriccios, roulades, and novel warblings, remain deep seated in the essential passions of man, love, hope, the political and the religious instincts, with devotion to home, country, and that appreciation of man in nature and acted on by the hidden and mysterious influences of nature which has been the richest contribution of English poetry in the nineteenth century to the literature of the world.

CHAPTER VIII

SOME SUCCESSORS OF SWINBURNE AND MEREDITH

IN one of an interesting and exceedingly valuable series of essays on English contemporary poets, completed a few years since, a general grouping of the more considerable names of the successors of Meredith and Swinburne was suggested, which cannot but help us in our present inquiry.[1] There are the Wordsworthians, eldest and most orthodox of whom, Mr. Robert Bridges, is the chief; and there is the rhapsodist, Francis Thompson, and Laurence Housman, who group somewhat together from their discipleship to the pre-Raphaelites in general and to Coventry Patmore in particular. There is the wide-spreading and active Celtic revival, headed by Mr. Yeats in Ireland, but disclosing a sympathetic activity in Scotland in the poetry of the late "Fiona Macleod" and in lesser poets of Wales and the Isle of Man. Then there are the virile "poets of empire," the late Mr. Henley, Mr. Kipling and Mr. Henry Newbolt; and the "decadents," such as Mr. Arthur Symons and the late Ernest Dowson. As to Mr. T. Sturge Moore, Mr. A. E. Housman, and the late John Davidson, the critic finds them "differing too greatly from any of the above groups to be associated with them, and differing as greatly from each other"; and he goes on to quote from an essay of Mr. Yeats in which that admirable poet and critic distinguishes the "interests" or absorbing topics of five of his greater contemporaries: "Contemporary English poets," writes Mr. Yeats, "are interested in the glory of the world like Mr. Rudyard Kipling; or in the order of the world like Mr. William Watson; or in the passion of the world like Mr. John Davidson; or in the pleasure of the world like Mr. Arthur Symons. Mr. Francis Thompson . . . is alone preoccupied with a spiritual life." With this for our rough chart let us embark on the perilous sea of the present, mindful that in this, our work with the lyric, we are neither judging any author in the completeness of his contribution to literature nor (when he is still with us) even in the completeness of his lyrical achievement. Moreover few judge well, deprived of the atmosphere of distance and the perspective of time.

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[1] "The Irish Literary Revival," by Cornelius Weygandt, *The Sewanee Review,* xii, No. 4, October, 1904.

By "the Wordsworthians" among our contemporary poets, Professor Weygandt, cited above, appears to mean less those whose cult is nature and the Delphic interpretation of her moods to the inner spirit of man, than the poets of blended Hebraic order and Hellenistic beauty, the spirit of which has inspired the august succession from Spenser and Milton, to Gray, Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Matthew Arnold, the spirit which, in a word, is most justly designated, as the critic has designated it, "fidelity to the Puritan point of view."[1] It cannot be a mere coincidence that these men were all of university training or that their contrasted compeers — Keats, Browning, Henley, and Yeats — were none of them so bred. The individual manifestations of the Puritan sense of order, of responsibility, of an afterworld and of our relations to it — even when that sense leads to doubt and negation — may differ in individual cases, but these things are the ruling qualities that inform alike the poetry of Mr. Bridges, Mr. William Watson, Mr. Stephen Phillips, and others, representative poets of this group.

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[1] C. Weygandt, "The Poetry of Mr. Stephen Phillips," *Sewanee Review*, January, 1909.

Mr. Robert Bridges is the dean of our present English poetry, his earliest work having appeared as far back as 1873, contemporary with the beau brocade and the blue china of the ballades and villanelles of Mr. Dobson, Mr. Gosse, and the late Mr. Lang. Mr. Bridges has paid tribute to his training in Latin verses and in the poetic treatment of many a beautiful myth of ancient Greece. He has written interesting dramas, in one especially, *The Feast of Bacchus*, attempting "to reproduce the artistic colloquialism of Greek Comedy," and his scholarship in modern letters is attested by his avowed lyrical debts to Italian and Spanish poets. In our immediate range of the lyric there is his sonnet sequence *The Growth of Love*, 1890, privately printed in black letter type that its innate poetic beauty might be fittingly clothed in the raiment of artistic printing; and thus several others of his books have been printed. On the other hand, Mr. Bridges collected his *Shorter Poems* into a popular form in 1890, and they have since gone through many editions. The lyrical poetry of Mr. Bridges is characterized by simplicity, unaffectedness, and a wholesome sentiment in which cheerfulness and hope abide. His descriptive fidelity to detail in his poems treating of nature — "There is a hill beside the silver Thames," "Hark to the merry birds," or the exquisite "Garden in September," for example — possesses both charm and atmosphere. He is full of echoes of our older poets, less in their words or subject-matter than in their manner and air. For example, his general copiousness and ease in versification and his facile command of familiar metres suggest Wither, his delightful poem "London Snow" reminds one of Charles Cotton's famous quatrains on morning, noon, and night, though the metre is different; and "On a Child Dead" suggests Lamb's subtler poem addressed to an infant dead as soon as born. Bridges has the Wordsworthian fidelity if not the Wordsworthian insight; he has at times, though not often, the Wordsworthian triviality, and it is doubtless as unwitting in him as in his great master. The Wordsworthian triviality, like the Miltonic want of a sense of humor, was in each case the price paid for a large simplicity of nature that in Milton ignored, in Wordsworth failed to correlate, the importance of things. Mr. Bridges has something of this, just as his estimable personality breathes in the sincerity and simplicity of his lyrical work. Some of his poems seem so natural and obvious as we read them for the first time that we fail fully to appreciate their unquestionable art. "The idle life I lead," "Ye thrilled me once, ye mournful strains," "I made another song" all are illustrations of this obviousness. Here, for example, is Mr. Bridges' simple, beautiful creed:

> I love all beauteous things,
>   I seek and adore them;
> God hath no better praise,
> And man in his hasty days
>   Is honored for them.
>
> I too will something make
>   And joy in the making:
> Altho' to-morrow it seem
> Like the empty words of a dream
>   Remembered on waking.

And in the lovely poem, "Long are the hours the sun is above," will be found a delicate spiritualism that fills out with deeper diapason the poet's love of the world. Has any one thought of Mr. Bridges as a reincarnate Campion? Each is deep in fealty to Apollo as the god of poetry and song, as well as the father of Æsculapius. Each theorized on the nature of metre and, with a learning born of a devoted love of the ancients, looked forward to new metrical worlds to conquer only to refute the whole by facile, unaffected, musical lyrical poetry compassed by a most orthodox following of the tradition of the past.

If Mr. Bridges is a Wordsworthian, possessed of something of Campion's sweet Elizabethan singing voice, Mr. William Watson harks back, for his distinction of style, his grand manner, and for his preoccupation with politics, to Milton, for his abiding sense of propriety to Gray and the eighteenth century. Of the eighteenth century, too, is Mr.

Watson's critical attitude, his clarity of diction and his stateliness. Indeed, Mr. Watson's muse is always more elegiac than lyrical. There is nothing of its kind finer than the admirable critical elegies, "The Tomb of Burns," "Shelley's Centenary," or "Wordsworth's Grave." Though dealing, as verse of universal regret must ever deal, with the larger commonplaces of elegiac emotion, we must deny to these fine poems (as we must deny to most of the poetry of Mr. Watson) any marked distinction of thought. Nor can any marked originality of subject be posited for Mr. Watson's poetry. His lyrics are often of the occasional kind, their seriousness alone taking them out of the category of *vers de société*, though not always successfully lifting them to the higher regions of lyrical art. When sustained by the power of epigram, Mr. Watson's shorter poems — "Liberty Rejected," "When birds were songless on the bough," "Under the dark and piney steeps," or "Thy voice from inmost dreamland calls," for example — approach the delicate art of Landor. We can hardly claim for Mr. Watson any greater love for nature than that which is the common birthright of our time. Of minute observance of her ways there is nothing in him, and perhaps it is only once, in the charming little lyric, "The Lure," that he so much as touches, in his uniform clarity and definiteness of line, the skirts of the wayward spirit of romantic beauty.

More truly a Wordsworthian in his loving attention to the flowers that grace his beloved English country-side and the dumb and vocal animal life that tenants it, is Mr.

Arthur Christopher Benson. In some half dozen volumes or more since 1893, Mr. Benson has shown himself more conscious in his literary style than Mr. Bridges and of a sadder and more introspective muse; less critical than Mr. Watson and free alike from his political and satirical bias, Mr. Benson is equally the meditative and elegiac poet and pervaded with as strong a moral and religious sense. So, too, Mr. Laurence Binyon is Wordsworthian in the power of his descriptive detail and in his contemplative treatment of his favorite London scene for material, although this by no means marks the limits of Mr. Binyon's range of poetical subject. Wordsworth's famous sonnet, "On London Bridge," may almost be said to have been the parent to them all, these "London Visions" of Mr. Binyon, the "London Voluntaries" of Henley, and the like poetry, inspired by the metropolis, of Buchanan, Davidson, and some others: "Now it is a great dray rolling down the street, its giant driver guiding it triumphantly; . . . now, the great golden dome of St. Paul's looming above the smoke-wrapped city; now Salvation Army singers, in whose enthusiasm the poet sees the reincarnation of the delirious spirit of the Dionysia's 'mad, leafy revels at the Wine-God's will'; now a quiet sunset on 'full-flooding Thames.' Various lights illumine these city scenes of Mr. Binyon's devices, but while dawnlight and full-moon and sunset color some, London at night inspires so many that I have come to think the characteristic lights of the poems are the flickering gas of street lamps." Contrasting some of these interesting *choses vues* of London, which border none the less on the genus lyric for the emotion with which their atmosphere is surcharged, the critic continues: "Mr. Binyon is most intent on the picture of his subject, where Henley is as much interested in the surge and sound that accompanies the picture as in the picture itself. Henley, too, is almost always the impressionist. Robert Buchanan cares much less for making pictures of city life than he does for telling the life-stories of victims of that life. Davidson has generally a problem to propound as well as a story to suggest and a picture to paint."[1]

To return to our "Puritan line" — Spenser, Milton, Gray, Wordsworth, Arnold — in Mr. Stephen Phillips we have once more the scholarly poet, telling over again in elaborated and beautiful verse, dramatic and epic, the lovely Greek myths that have been hallowed by centuries of transmitted culture. Mr. Phillips is not primely original in thought; but he is a born stylist, limpid and dignified in his often exquisite poetical diction, and, for his individual trait of difference, "preoccupied [to an extraordinary degree in a poet who is neither mystical nor theological] with the world beyond the grave." A quiet acceptance of the dead as always present in our lives is the theme of poem after poem of Mr. Phillips.[2] In others there is almost the Hellenic vivid sense for the world, together with a very un-Hellenic recognition of human weakness. Beautiful and of a dignified solemnity are some of the shorter poems of Mr. Phillips. Equally a devotee of Greek beauty is Mr. T. Sturge Moore, and equally happy in retelling those golden tales of the ancients that no repetition at the hands of a true poet can ever stale. Hardly since the time of Keats have lines so colorful, so instinct with reality, been written of that dim past; though Mr. Moore has neither the music nor the crystalline clarity of Keats, for which he substitutes a vivid picturesqueness, his inheritance from the pre-Raphaelites.[1] The art of Mr. Moore is at its best in descriptive passages dealing minutely with details that build up a striking poetical picture, and he has many a poetic grace that is none the less effective from its Homeric or other classical origin. Both of these poets are elegiac rather than strictly lyrical, and few, if any of their professed poems of lyrical type, bubble with the joy of song.

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[1] C. Weygandt, "The Poetry of Mr. Laurence Binyon," *Sewanee Review*, July, 1905, pp. 282–283.

[2] Witness "The Apparition," "Earth Bound," "To a Lost Love," for example.

With Mr. A. E. Housman, author of that remarkable and original collection of lyrics, *A Shropshire Lad*, we return once more to our Wordsworthians; and Mr. Housman's Wordsworthianism consists in a realization, often as complete as Wordsworth's at his best, of the innate poetry of common and rural life, seen objectively but felt within. The language of these poems is so simple, the thought so unadorned, or where adorned so natural, the metres so usual, the subjects so universal, that we must seek, if we are to appreciate to the full the consummate art that underlies them. Mr. Housman is no mere rural singer like Burns or even Barnes, but a man of culture who has reincarnated his poet's spirit in every-day Shropshire life. An interesting contrast has been suggested between *A Shropshire Lad*, and Mr. Hardy's strange but holding volume, *Essex Poems*, the gatherings-in of realistic reminiscences of early years, told with the literary and dramatic power that makes Mr. Hardy one of the great novelists, but with an occasional awkwardness and prevailing stiffness that marks the prose-man working in verse. Mr. Housman has none of this stiffness, but is master of the medium in which he works; but he shares to a remarkable degree Mr. Hardy's fatalism, his sense of the oppression of reality, as he shares his fine abandonment to the charm of sorceress Nature. This is only one of the several variations and changes of mood that these choice lyrics portray; but the close is characteristic of the unaffected and wistful melancholy that pervades them, whatever the theme.

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[1] See "Theseus," "Medea," above all the fine poetic drama, *Aphrodite against Artemis*, and the lyrics of the volumes *Theseus* and *The Gazelles*.

'T is time, I think, by Wenlock town
The golden broom should blow;
The hawthorn sprinkled up and down
Should charge the land with snow.

Spring will not wait the loiterer's time
Who keeps so long away;
So others wear the broom and climb
The hedgerows heaped with may.

Oh tarnish late on Wenlock Edge,
  Gold that I never see;
Lie long, high snowdrifts in the hedge
  That will not shower on me.

Leaving to the anthologies the many lesser and estimable Wordsworthians in the variety of their introspection, their meditation, sonneteering, and ceremonious observances before the altar of their goddess, Nature, let us turn to the two poets whose later inspiration in a way links on to the pre-Raphaelites and the later lyrical poetry of Coventry Patmore. It was at the opening of the year 1894 that that "captain of song" (as Thompson called him in later beautiful lines on his portrait) heralded to the world a new poet, Francis Thompson, in a short appreciation of admirable insight; and no less a poet than Browning added, too, his cordial appreciation. Thompson was of a Roman Catholic family that went back into the Mother Church with the Oxford Movement. He seems to have been a creature strangely incapable of taking care of himself in a work-a-day world; and his vicissitudes, as a shoemaker's assistant, a sandwich-man, a match-seller in London streets, a very pariah among men, were they actually known or in place for revelation here, would outrival the uttermost strangeness of biographical adventure. Saved literally from the street by the friendship of Mr. and Mrs. Meynell (the latter a writer of memorable lyrics), Thompson passed the last years of his life in a Sussex religious house in the quiet needful for the development of his unique poetic genius, and ceased wisely to write when he felt, towards the end, his poetic powers to be failing. Several volumes, *Poems*, *Sister Songs*, and *New Poems*, followed the poet's immediate acceptance among the greater singers of the late Victorian days; and the earlier patronizing terms, "a reincarnate Crashaw," "a modern Cowley," "a rhapsodist of incorrigible fertility and of as incorrigible an obscurity," have been followed by a general recognition in Francis Thompson of a poet of superb imagination, "inexhaustible opulence," a seer as well as a singer of unimpeachable genius. Thompson's subjects are as diverse as they are imaginatively beautiful and happy in treatment. The seraphic praise of spiritual beauty, an almost metaphysical treatment of the passion of love, a hymning of the ineffable glory of dawn or of the sinking of the sun to rest in their analogies as cosmic phenomena related to universal life and inevitable death — such are some of the extraordinary themes of this extraordinary singer. His inspiration is suffused with a spirit of worship and praise that transcends the ordinary significance of the word religious as his use of scientific thought and metaphysical ratiocination is consistently transmuted into vitalized and surpassingly effective poetry. No English poet except Donne has so poetized metaphysical thought: compare

> She wears that body but as one indues
> A robe, half careless, for it is the use;
> Although her soul and it so fair agree
> We sure may, unattaint of heresy,
> Conceit it might the soul's begetter be,

with this of Donne:

> One, whose clear body was so pure and thin
> Because it need disguise no thought within,
> 'T was but a through-light scarf her mind t' enroll
> Or exhalation breathed out of her soul.

Again, no English poet except Crashaw has so transfused his words in his ideas, his ideas in his words, by means of the white heat of ecstatic emotion. Nor is conceit and the extravagant metaphor of the Carolan absent from the Victorian, though often justified by its supreme success, as for example where the creation of a field flower is described:

> God took a fit of Paradise-wind,
>   A strip of cœrule weather,
> A thought as simple as Himself,
>   And ravelled them together.

With a power over the larger cadences of verse only exceeded by Shelley himself, I find in Francis Thompson a richer color, a more esoteric thought, dare it be said, if less melody, a more harmonized music. To begin quoting Thompson is to be caught in the maze of his exquisite imagery; although his large thought, fretted with recurrent graces, scarcely lends itself readily to fragmentary quotations. His is the command of music, color, picture, and upbearing lyric fire. He can be subtle in psychology as in the little series, "A Narrow Vessel," charmingly delicate and fanciful, as in the dainty lines "To a snow flake," magnificently daring as where he cries:

> Look up, O mortals, and the portent heed;
> In very deed,

Washed with new fire to their irradiant birth,
Reintegrated are the heavens and earth;
From sky to sod,
The world's unfolded blossom smells of God.

And he can compel a great thought, at need, into a distich, as

Short arm needs man to reach to Heaven
So ready is Heaven to stoop to him.

While the early discipleship of Mr. Laurence Housman to the pre-Raphaelites is not to be questioned, I can find nothing of the rhapsodist, of the poet that spontaneously and ecstatically sings in him; and his contrasts rather than his resemblances to Francis Thompson are the most striking.[1] Thompson is religious, Mr. Housman is theological; Thompson's fervor is the current on which he is borne, Mr. Housman's fervor and sincerity — and it would be vain to deny him either — seem fully in his control, sometimes a little goaded to expression, eked out and ingenious. Mr. Housman seems possessed of a far more genuine conviction of sin than is fashionable in our current practical theologies. To him, after seventeenth-century ideals, this life is a prison-house in which the soul is justly incarcerated, and man is essentially vain and worthless. Submission to God is a mystery which no man can fathom, and a longing hope for annihilation is all that remains. Mr. Housman seems never really glad, his inspiration is ever sombre and life a tragic fact. He says somewhere, "Unfortunately there are to be found, to sit in judgment, minds of a literal persuasion that take from the artist his own soul, to set it in the image that he has made."[1] But who can escape such a temptation where the poetic attitude is so consistently maintained. With the confession of an absolute inability to sympathize with the sombre, theological, hopeless pose of Mr. Housman, let us grant him the recognition due his carefully executed verse and the distinction that undoubtedly enables him to wear his *Rue* with a difference.[2]

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[1] See Mr. Housman's first volume, *Green Arras*, 1896.

Although the late John Davidson is absolutely removed in his whole manner of thought from these two poets of faith, he seems best described, like the former, as a rhapsodist in whom, however, force rules rather than the sense of beauty. Davidson has been aptly dubbed "a Scotsman of the perfervid, not the canny type": and perfervidness is the quality that accounts for his poetic eloquence and extravagance of diction, his lapses of technique and the circumstance that, in all his ably written dramas, his witty and poetic *Fleet Street Eclogues*, and his vigorous and significant ballads, there is scarcely to be found one completely successful lyric. His force often becomes violence, his figurative language conceit, his originality stridency. For Nature he has a passion; and he handles her like a Goth. A thrush sings for Davidson "like one that sings in Hell"; daisies are "the land-wide Milky-Way" and elsewhere "a snowy leprosy" upon the land; a lily is "on fire with newly budded love." And Davidson's poetic theory is as violent as the extremes of his poetry. "Poetry is the will to live, the will to power; poetry is the empire. Poetry is life and force"; and rime is "a property of decadence." [1] But enough; that lyricism should flourish in such hands is amazing: to leave the poetry of Davidson unmentioned among his peers would be unjust.

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[1] *All Fellows*, preface.

[2] One of Mr. Housman's books is entitled *Spikenard*, another *Rue*.

From Thompson and other poets whose lives were pervaded by the fervor of the older faith, the transition is best made to the lyrists of the Neo-Celtic revival by means of the late Lionel Johnson, an Englishman by birth, though proud of his Irish blood and sympathetic with Ireland's traditions and ideals. The range of Johnson's poetry is wider than that of either Francis Thompson or Mr. Housman. The religious note in him is less ungoverned and rhapsodic than the former's, and freer from the ecclesiasticism and hopelessness of the latter. Johnson has the scholar's reminiscence of his reading in the literature of his own tongue as well as in the classics, and he translates his recollections into the terms of genuine poetry in poems such as "Oxford Nights" or "The Classics," and in a way quite his own. His is a deep seated love of place and of individual friends, a fine sense for nature and an intellectuality above most of his immediate fellows. Johnson's, too, is the distinction of a fine poetic style, more indistinct than Watson's, firmer sinewed and more controlled than that of Francis Thompson and infused with a deeper originality. There is no hackneyed thought in lyrics such as "Bagley Wood," "Harmonies," "The Precept of Silence," or "Cadgworth":

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[1] *Holiday and Other Poems with a Note on Poetry*, 1906, p. 149.

My windows open to the autumn night,
In vain I watch for sleep to visit me:
How should sleep dull mine ears, or dim my sight,
Who saw the stars, and listened to the sea?

Ah, how the City of our God is fair!
If, without sea, and starless though it be,
For joy of the majestic beauty there,
Men shall not miss the stars, nor mourn the sea.

And now a word as to the lyrical poetry of the Celtic revival, concerning which if the present writer exhibit a somewhat unorthodox attitude, the total lack of anything Celtic in his blood may be pleaded in extenuation if not in excuse. As some have written, it might be thought that there had been no imagination or poetry in England had it not been for the spirit of the Celt, that the supernatural, the spiritual, the ideal, the romantic, all were evolved by the Celt and existent in the proportion in which Celtic blood had intermingled to enrich the sluggish Saxon stream. When it is recalled, however, that, save for a few of the remotest corners of the British Isles (which corners, by the way, have not produced any great poetry), the entire realm is populated by a mixed race, and when it is further recalled that Spenser, Shakespeare, Coleridge, Shelley, and Keats, in none of whom the Celtic strain can be proved to be predominant, each and all possessed these "Celtic" traits of imagination, ideality, romanticism, and supernaturalism to a high degree, the ineptitude of refer-ring all these things to one source is too patent to require further discussion. In our concern with the lyric written in the English tongue we have disregarded for the most part geographical boundaries, at least those of Great Britain. It is impossible not to remember Burns and Hogg as Scotchmen; we need not emphasize that circumstance with Stevenson or Thomson. Goldsmith and Emily Brontë were both Irish: which of us remembers the last as an Irishwoman until we find her claimed for admirable poetry, not distinctively Irish, in a book of "Irish verse"? In short, as in the case of poetry written in America by those born elsewhere than in any of the British Isles, there is a danger of making too much of these geographical divisions. None the less, as we have already seen, there is a Celtic revival which embraces the literary activities of natives of Scotland, Ireland, and Wales; and the most active as well as the most distinctively national phase of that revival is the Irish literary movement. To the last let us turn our attention, recalling that we must leave out of consideration its very material contributions to imaginative prose and to the drama wherein it is unquestionably the most distinguished.

In a very attractive little volume entitled *A Book of Irish Verse Selected from Modern Writers*, Mr. Yeats has collected together what his fine poetic taste considers best in the poetry of his countrymen from Oliver Goldsmith to Lionel Johnson and Miss Dora Sigerson. Sheridan, Moore, Darley and Mangan, Ferguson, de Vere, Davis and Allingham, all in their differing degrees, with some others belong to the past, and have received such attention in this book as a sense of proportion can allow them. To that past, too, belongs Edward Walsh, the selections from whose poetry in Mr. Yeats's volume show a ready adapter of Irish song to English verse with an effective employment of sonorous Irish proper names, especially by way of refrain. Two other poets of the volume, each yet alive and equally beholden to the wealth of the literary and traditional literature of their favored country, are Mr. Thomas William Rolleston and Dr. Douglas Hyde, who have been so active in the forward movement of Irish literary thought.[1] Some of these artistic English versions labelled "from the Irish" — "Were you on the mountain," "Thy grief on the sea," or "I shall not die for thee," all by Dr. Hyde — are charming; and, in the absence of definite information on the subject, one wonders how much is really "old Irish" and how much is due to the cultivated literary thought of the modern poet and his fine command of the tongue of his Sassenach enemy.

Mr. Yeats is unquestionably the head and front of the contemporary Celtic movement in literature. We like and honor him for his theories and ideals as we acclaim him and admire him for his beautiful poetry, narrative, dramatic, and lyrical. The inspiration and fascination of a primitive race, simple, noble, brave beyond the heroes, imaginative above the poets, mysteriously half-suggested in the fragmentary literature that has come down to us, all this is patent to the reader of Mr. Yeats; and it is equally patent that the Irish poet is heir as well to an unIrish inheritance, his limpid English diction, his command of English metres and music in words, his mastery of many an image and many a noble thought which has come to him by right of his poetic inheritance and by way of the long and august line of English poets that has preceded him. The pre-Raphaelite affinities of Mr. Yeats are not to be disputed, specific definiteness in the midst of visionary indefiniteness — "the red rose upon the rood of Time," "The nine bean rows" of Innisfree, "the white feet of angels seven." His sense of color, which is quite his own, is yet often as conventionalized as Rossetti's: "the blue star of twilight," "the leopard colored trees," "a green drop in the surge," "the curd-pale moon"; the heart of Fergus is a "small slate-colored thing," and "white" are the birds of death. In lyrics such as "The Cloak, the Boat and the Shoes," "A Dream of a Blessed Spirit," especially in "Ephemera" (too long to quote here), is to be found the new, strange note of this best of the Irish singers. There is a sense of unreality about Mr. Yeats's poetic treatment of this visible world that extends to his imaginative treatment of the other world as well:

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[1] Mr. Rolleston is editor with Mr. A. Stopford Brooke, the well-known critic, who is also an Irishman and a poet, of *A Treasury of Irish Poetry in the English Tongue*, 1905, an admirable work.

> For the elemental beings go
> About my table to and fro.
> In flood and fire and clay and wind
> They huddle from man's pondering mind;
> Yet he who treads in austere ways
> May surely meet their ancient gaze.

Man ever journeys on with them
After the red-rose-bordered hem.
Ah, faeries, dancing under the moon
A Druid land, a Druid tune!

It is, after all, the delicate modern craftsman's use of this delightful old material of a perished age. We shall not ask Mr. Yeats if he believes in the charming supernaturalism that he practises so well (in his plays, *The Land of Heart's Desire* or in *The Countess Cathleen,* for example), or if his tone of fatalistic otherworldliness is "old Irish" or modern Maeterlinckian.

Another leader of the Neo-Celtic poetry in Ireland is "A. E.," that is, Mr. George William Russell, who has been described as "The Irish Emerson," a sobriquet far from unhappy considering his transcendental ideals, his mysticism, his "poetry of cold ecstasy," and on the other hand his eminent practicality as a man. Mr. Russell is poet, painter, dramatist, organizer of an agricultural society, editor and inspirer of much in the forward movement, literary and economic, of his country. Poetry is to him no mere art, the expression of beauty; it is rather a species of enthusiasm by means of which the poet is uplifted into a closer communion with the universal spirit, by means of which, to employ the Emersonian phrase, "the soul returns to the Over-soul." [1] Twilight in sunrise or more particularly falling into sunset, the effects of light in darkness and dreamland with the massing glories of the evening and midnight skies — these more commonly than the phenomena of terrestrial nature, offer "A. E." the materials of his art. "A. E." loves to hark back to the glories of remote ages, Babylon, Egypt, legendary Ireland, to feel that at times we may attain the detachment, the abstractness of "our ancestral selves." His is a vivid sense of the immensity of time and its unity, of the reincarnation of the past in the present; and his noble poetry, which is unEmersonian in its consummate technique and uniform excellence, is preoccupied almost to the degree of sameness with "the calm and proud procession of eternal things."

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[1] C. Weygandt, in *Sewanee Review,* April, 1907.

There is not among the poets of *The Book of Irish Verse* or elsewhere an Irish lyrist who ranks with these — Johnson, Yeats, Russell; though there are charming and interesting poems by Charles Weekes, who shares somewhat the mysticism of Mr. Russell, "John Eglinton" and the several distinguished Irishwomen, Miss Dora Sigerson (Mrs. Shorter), Mrs. Katherine Tynan Hinkson, Miss Moira O'Neill, Miss Nora Hopper (Mrs. Chesson), and Miss Carberry (now Mrs. McManus), who have made their country's lore and sentiment lyrically tuneful. There remains one name that links on here logically with these poets who are Celtic and so largely mystic. In 1905 occurred the death of William Sharp, the friend and biographer of Rossetti, long known to the world as one whose somewhat slender promise in poetry had been superseded by a fuller achievement in criticism. With the death of Mr. Sharp came the disclosure, long suspected, that he was really the author of the interesting work in verse and prose which had been appearing for some years under the name of "Fiona Macleod." [1] The lyrical verse of "Fiona Macleod" is possessed of an unmistakable charm; "hers" (shall we say?) are the graces of simplicity and melody, haunting at times. Here, too, is the Celtic mystery and melancholy which, while in no wise insincere, does not strike the reader as so deep and essential as it is merely artistic. William Sharp as a poet would scarcely have been without Rossetti; his poetical reincarnation as "Fiona Macleod" would have been impossible but for Irish neo-romanticism.

From the otherworld and the world that *has been*, we turn to the world that *is* with Mr. Kipling and "the poets of empire." Mr. Kipling has worried the critics, who find him unauthentic in his art and declare his language journalese. And Mr. Kipling has retorted with spirit and unmistakable import as to art and as to the limits thereof. In his verse and prose he shares the experience of several of the greatest of English writers in that he is untraditional, unconventional, unbound by the petty by-laws of what we may term literary drawing-room manners. Shakespeare, Defoe, Dickens, each was equally unauthentic in his time, and each was equally contemporaneous and successful. Mr. Kipling takes the current talk of the street, the gun-room, the smoking-room on liner or transcontinental railroad, and infuses into it a melody of words, a pointedness of expression sustained by a sentiment or emotion generally accepted: and produces poetry as the result. His heroes are men who do and dare; his horizon extends over the superficies of the globe and faces strange lands and strange faces; but his ideas are circumscribed by the prejudices and the generosities of his English blood. Mr. Kipling is not alone in his realism, his vigor, his patriotism, or his employment of verse for the conveyance of contemporary political comment. This last descended from Milton to Tennyson, Buchanan, and Watson, to name only these. War poetry is one of England's lyrical birthrights from Michael Drayton to this our own "era of peace." Nor was Mr. Kipling either the first to give us the poetry of the barrack-room and that fine recognition of the worth of even a heathen foeman: witness some of the stirring poems of Sir Francis Hastings Doyle. Mr. Kipling's distinction — as often pointed out — is his grasp of the great idea of empire, of expansion, of the essential unity of the Anglo-Saxon race, the greatness, the glory, the heroic mission of which to subjugate the world is with him alike a religion and an obsession. Lyrically Mr. Kipling is abundantly successful and that, too, with material that daintier poets might hesitate to employ. His instrument is the military band in which the wind of brass and of wood sounds out, bravely emphasized with instruments of percussion. None the less, it is astonishing what tenderness and sweetness he at times achieves in his masterly use of the material at hand. The cockney Tommy Atkins, the tramp whaler, the renegade and ne'er-do-well knocking about the globe (to say nothing of his Oriental figures) find their glorification in Kipling, and the sentiments of their universal humanity raise his verses again and again into the regions of poetry. In the patriotic verse of Henry Newbolt the present writer feels a decided drop. Mr. Newbolt is contained in a corner of Mr. Kipling's lordly domain, and his song, save for a few poems latterly, is comprehended in a fervent love of England and her heroes and in praises of her naval prestige. Unlike his master, although a fluent verseman Mr. Newbolt is rarely musical; only the refrain of "The Fighting Téméraire" in his earliest volume, *Admirals All*, really haunts the memory. Mr. Alfred Noyes, too, is "a poet of empire"; and in one fine lyric at least, "The Island Hawk, a song for the launching of his majesty's aerial navy," he has extended England's primacy of the sea to the dominion of the air. But Mr. Noyes is many other things in poetry besides, — a disciple of Buchanan and the lyrists of London streets, in the dramatic and humanitarian touch of such poems as "In a Railway Carriage" or "An East End Coffee House"; of Meredith, perhaps, in his fanciful, and at times imaginative, poetry of nature.[1] With Mr. John Masefield we return to the more accepted limits of the "poets of empire." There is atmosphere about his "Spanish Waters," as about his bits of English landscape, and he holds lands not in fief to the principality of Kipling. As to the rest, who hector with Buchanan or strut after Kipling, their name is legion and their fame is negligible. The one great fact for England is the sea, and he would be but a poor Briton in these our late facile times who could not turn "a song of empire" and admonish England of her greatness, of her burden, or of her forgetfulness.

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[1] See the admirable memoir of her husband, compiled by Mrs. Sharp and published in 1910.

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[1] See especially the charming poem, "The Rock Pool."

Lastly of this grouping there is Mr. Arthur Symons and his fellow-worshipper at the shrine of Aphrodite, the late Ernest Dowson, to name in this most ancient cult of the poets only the foremost of her ever-continuous host of devotees. Mr. Symons has told effectively of the shy and vagabond life of Dowson, and edited his poetry with the affectionate regard born of a kinship of tastes.[1] By some Dowson has been esteemed the superior poet; he is assuredly less the conscious man of letters, and scarcely a line of his slender volume is without its interest. Mr. Symons is a distinguished critic and a poet of an intense and veritable gift, however he has elected to limit the range of his melody. Clearly Mr. Symons caught the torch of his erotic song at the altars which Swinburne lighted to the same great goddess, but he has not followed his master into the fanes of other deities and his music is less dithyrambic and diverse. Of late the critics have much employed the term "decadent," to apply or misapply to any trait or idiosyncrasy which the particular critic of the moment may happen to dislike in the poet of his particular mention. In the accepted sense, decay is the antithesis of life; it is the fate of the bud to open and of the full blown flower to fall. In another sense, dissolution and the signs of dissolution are as much a process of nature as birth and the evidences of growth. That a poet should be dubbed a poet of decadence because of his preoccupation with man's passion for woman seems absurd. In the intensity of its earthiness, in its inconstancy, and in the despair and regret that the contemplation of the ashes of desire leave always in him who has burned in the flame, human passion is in itself no more degenerate than any other preoccupation in literature, that for example of the satirist or of the hymnist who finds, in every work of God, the symbolic figuration of the ceremonials of his individual cult. However, it is not to be denied that in Mr. Symons and, to a lesser degree, in Dowson, there is a neurotic note, unlike the cynicism and flippancy of the Carolan lyrists and the sentimentality that followed in later generations. The ecstasies, the raptures of love, the fatalism with which its brevity and its haunting memories are met, the acknowledgement of passion's imperious mastery — these are decadent notes: notes that seem those only of singers that have made "pleasure" the end of life and, joying in it to the full, have known to the full its vanity. In poems such as "The Chimæra" (a remarkable piece) and "The Dogs," in lyrics, often poetically exquisite, such as the collection "Bianca," in single poems, "Morbidezza," "Stella Maris," or "Leves Amores," will be found the unmistakably "decadent" note that Mr. Symons has caught with some other features of his delicate and seductive art from such men as Baudelaire and Verlaine.

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[1] *The Poems of Ernest Dowson*, Portland, Maine, 1892.

Mr. Archer's valuable volume, *Poets of the Younger Generation,* now ten years old, includes twenty-three names.

A dozen have received our attention; eight others are American and fall not therefore within the scheme of this book. Four more, Mr. Trench, author of *Deirdre Wed*, Mrs. Hinkson, Miss Hopper (Mrs. Chesson), and Miss Sigerson (Mrs. Shorter) belong more or less closely to the "Irish movement." The rest, Mr. Le Gallienne, Mr. Money-Coutts, and Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch among them, each deserves critical attention, and should have it here did the plan of this book permit so close a scrutiny of our contemporary poetry. To differentiate, too, the sincere, capable, and often beautiful poetry of the eight women of British birth whose names appear in Mr. Archer's list of honor, would be equally worth while, but disproportionate. Mrs. Meynell, for example, is distinguished among poets of her sex for her mastery of form and her distinction of manner, Mrs. Woods for her intellectuality. Mrs. Radford is a very genuine lyrist whose verses sound with a note unrepetitious of others' songs; and as might be expected, in the poets of Irish birth we reach most frequently that weird and wistful sorrow — though less often the magic — that criticism associates with the Celt. As to the many new aspirants for poetic fame who press upon the contemporary critic their various claims for immediate recognition, we are too near as yet to do them justice and would rather err in a knowing silence than by false acclaim.

In this our study of the English lyric, we have been distraught with many considerations. For the lyric in one age was not the lyric of all, and our point of view has necessarily shifted with the changing procession of time. Two elements, however, remain permanent to distinguish the lyric from other kinds of poetry: that which makes the lyric an expression of the world within, and secondly, the element of song. In Anglo-Saxon times we find the lyric as yet in solution, and unseparated from imaginative elements of other kinds. The spirit of the age was serious and gloomy, abashed before the mysterious powers of nature, sensible of the littleness of man; and the tone of its inward spirit was elegiac, a tone, be it remembered, that has remained the essential ground-note of English poetry to our present day. With the *trouvère* came gaiety, song, and lyrical form, though we are never to forget the foundations of the music of poetry in the rhythm of the folk and the enormous contribution, could we but know its limits and nature, of the ballad to early lyrical song. Mediæval song was alike the folk's, the minstrel's, and the dignified possession of the church. And the lines that divided each from each were often ill defined. None the less English lyrical poetry from the earliest mediæval times has about it the consciousness of art, a matter determinable from its elaborate and varied form and from the completeness with which it approaches the motives and conventions of French lyrical poetry. The mediæval lyrist, were he clerk, monk, or minstrel, remained for the most part anonymous, and the great names in the poetry of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, even Chaucer's among them, are not such for their contributions to the lyrical art.

In Dunbar and Skelton we reach for the first time in the lyric a modern tone, howsoever each was allied in habit of thought and in practice of poetry with the mediæval past. Both the Scottish James IV and Henry VIII were immensely interested in poetry, but it was in the court of the latter that new influences from the Continent came to revolutionize English lyrical poetry in particular and to introduce in full power that subjective and individual note in the impetus of which we are still living. The difference between the song of the minstrel or the fervid Mariolatry of the mediæval hymn and our lyrics of to-day is a difference in kind; the difference between the songs and sonnets of Wyatt or Surrey and the love poetry of to-day is merely a difference in degree. With Wyatt, the influence of Petrarch came into the language, substituting a Platonized cult of conventionalized passion for the earlier and equally conventionalized lyrics of idealized courtship, the poetical staple of *troubadour* and *trouvère*, but often spiritualizing and ennobling that cult in the very process that made it again and again the spontaneous outpouring of an individual human passion. It matters less than nothing whether Sidney loved Stella or not, whether Shakespeare unlocked his heart in the sonnets, or Spenser married the lady whom he courted so absolutely in accord with the canons of Petrarchan art. What does matter is that in the splendid body of Elizabethan sonnets and in the songs, pastoral, incidental to the drama, written to be set to music, sacred and profane, we have as sincere, as spontaneous, as artistic, and as musical an outburst of lyrical poetry as any nation or time can boast. In view of this we may grant that the Elizabethan lyric is unequal, that it is more an art of great impact than of sustained effect, that there were a few in this prodigious chorus of sweet sound that could not sing and would not be silent. But in large, never has the gift of song been so widely diffused, so lavishly displayed, so crowned with definite artistic success. Only a few of our later lyrists can stand the test of juxtaposition beside the best lyrical poetry of Breton, Daniel, Drummond, or Campion, not to mention the greater names. The things that the Elizabethans set out to do, they did incomparably well; nor can we claim with all our diversity a greater profundity for more recent song, in view of the depth of thought, the wealth of imagination, and the fullness of significance that characterizes, now and again, the lyrical poetry of Greville, Shakespeare, Jonson, and Donne.

Neither does the lyric in the days of King James and King Charles fall much inferior; for some of the greater earlier names continue into the reign of the first to be succeeded by lesser though still potent voices. There is a richness of color and a choice perfection of form about many of the lyrics of the Stuart days that go far to compensate for the loss of something of the spontaneous freshness of Elizabeth's time. It is difficult to subscribe to a recent opinion that belittles Herrick to a place below

Waller, and falls into diatribes as to the petty subjects of that delightful poet's delicate art.[1] Among the lyrists it is not always by their philosophy of life that ye shall know them, and we could ill spare Herrick, Carew, or Suckling, were our gain only among the deeps of the understanding. A feature of Carolan times in the history of poetry was the rise of the devotional lyric in the hands of Herbert, Crashaw, and Vaughan, to a union of the choicest devotional fervor with a competent poetic art. These names stand to-day unparalleled in the history of the English religious lyric, however an occasional poem may rise to a place beside their best endeavors. In Milton, the joyous spirit of Renaissance poetry passed into the shadow of Puritanism and in so doing gained in nobility, in artistic purpose and restraint far more than it lost. Milton's classicism came pure from the inspiring font of Hippocrene; the classicism of Dryden was of a less authentic source, and was rather a classicism of reaction.

Whatever our definitions of these abused words it is best to recognize always that "classicism and romanticism are tendencies rather than opposed methods of art. Literature has always partaken of both, although one may dominate in one age, the other in another."[2] In the seventeenth century the fertile and ready Elizabethan imagination which had made the age of Shakespeare glorious, degenerated at times into ingenuity, extravagance, and fantasticality, and the concettists practised a species of perverted Petrarchism that became an abomination to all men of common sense. It was because of this that the classical taste of Ben Jonson, a force counter to the romanticists of his time, made headway to lead, in a succession of very definite steps, through Waller and Dryden to the restrictive "classical" poetry of the days of Pope. In this rationalizing process the lyric nearly expired, for the lyric is dependent more than any other form of poetry on the exercise of the imagination, or at least on the incentive of her lively foster-sister, the fancy. It was for this reason, despite the noble sonnets of Milton, that the idea of a lyric degenerated in the days of Dryden into a poem of gallantry or, at best, a product of sentimentality; and it continued to languish in an atmosphere of indulgent contempt until an imaginative conception of man and the world reasserted itself with the revival of the romantic temper.

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[1] P. E. More, in an article on Herrick, *The Nation*, October, 1912.

[2] See the present writer's "Ben Jonson and the Classical School," *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, XIII, 1898; and the helpful definitions of W. A. Neilson, *Essentials of Poetry*, 1912, p. 13.

That that revival, beginning with Blake and Chatterton, should have been manifold was in the nature of things. For the new romanticism flowered in the glorified folk-poetry of Burns, in Byron's reincarnation of the spirit of revolt, and in Shelley's impracticable idealist's passion for reforming mankind; in a new unveiling of earth in her perennial beauty, that was Keats; and in a revelation of the divine significance of that beauty to man, that was

Wordsworth. It is impossible here to recapitulate the many notes in that Renaissance of wonder, that spread from the supernaturalism of Coleridge to the artistic mediævalism of Tennyson, and to that interesting conventionalized realization of strange beauty which we designate pre-Raphaelitism. Among Victorian poets the lyric conformed ever more and more to the complexities, the doubts, and the aspirations of our intricate modern life, opening a hundred new channels for the expression of human emotion and keeping pace in the variety of its form and mood with an age the essence of which was its eclecticism. It is no wonder that we pause before some new province, reduced to the dominion of poetry, and question the authenticity, as some did with Browning, of an art so novel and unsupported with the buttresses of precedent. With Wordsworth holding far over into the reign, with the Tennysonian artistry, with Browning's wealth of significance, and with the incomparable music and technical virtuosity of Swinburne all considered, Victoria's reign was an extraordinary time for poetry, and the essence of that poetry, here as elsewhere, was lyrical. The Oxford Movement was less fraught with meaning to the development of poetry than to the history of human thought; but if we associate Newman's return to a more primitive form of Christianity with the return of Rossetti and his followers to the canons of an equally primitive art, and recall the important reaction in which was begotten Arnold's poetry of doubt, the Oxford Movement also assumes importance as affecting certain modes of lyrical poetry. With the latter years of Victoria came the poetry of empire, the logical continuance of a variety of the art of individual expression, almost as old as the language, although only latterly, since Tennyson, prevailingly lyrical. While lastly, there remains also with us the insistent poetry of the Celtic revival, youngest of the daughters of romance, a trifle forward at times and of no such mysterious ancestry, when all has been said, as she would mystify us into believing.

It is a commonplace of the latest review of the latest volume of verse, whether English or American, to deplore the decay of poetry among us and to ask: "Now Tennyson is gone and Browning, Swinburne and Meredith too, what more is there ever for us to hope for in poetry?" Yet among English speaking nations, never before has poetry been more generally read or more prevalently printed in the magazines of the moment and in new volumes, courting more permanent preservation. This diffusion of an interest in poetry has bettered the technique of our versifiers, while keeping their art more or less along the beaten path of accepted standards. It has made poetry popular, if it has lowered somewhat our literary standards. Whether our greater English poets are more admired than read is a recurrent academic question. Perhaps, if they were more carefully pondered, fewer would attempt with easy conscience their difficult art. As it is, nearly everybody now writes verses (they are almost as common as short stories); and what is more, nearly everybody prints them. The lyrical address to flower, beast, sunset, or season, each of these things vocal and solicitous to teach unhappy man some fine lesson or other, the sentimental or humorous poem of childhood, the tender lyric of regret for a fair maid who died young or married the market-gardener — who does not know these things and, recognizing them, read anything else? Even worse than these is the solemn injunction as to the white man's duty to go out somewhere and civilize some one of a darker complexion at the point of a gun, or the inspired vision, prayer, or what not that ought to be forbidden, like profanity, for its incessant calling on the name of God in vain. These things nearly any one can turn out now in contemporary England, or in contemporary America, Canada, or Australia for that matter, in facile rime and with a requisite precision as to the number of syllables: and in some places our taste has not sufficiently progressed for the majority of us to prefer silence. None the less, with the work of the poets enumerated in this chapter before us — to say nothing here of that wide outer empire of song that so far exceeds the limits of English political dominion — despair as to the future of poetry in the English tongue is preposterous. Our poetry, like our religion, is apt to adjust itself but slowly to the changes in our social and political conditions. Art must ever follow after nature, and in the race art runs, like religion once more, in the gyves of precedent and convention. Our very rebels in poetry turn a half-averted face backward to the past of Greece, the Renaissance, and their own England, and carry with them an ever-lengthening chain that binds them to the precious literary traditions of the race. Thus it is that that past becomes a warranty of the future of our art; and the art of the lyrist remains, like the gods, ever young and never dying.

THE END

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